

Entangled Histories of the Balkans

*Volume Two:
Transfers of Political Ideologies
and Institutions*

Edited by Roumen Daskalov
& Diana Mishkova



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NOTE ON transliteration

In this collective volume, we use several different systems to transliterate Cyrillic scripts. For Macedonian and Serbian, we follow the commonly accepted Latin transliteration of these languages, which involves the usage of special characters with diacritics (such as *č*, *š* and *ž* for the Cyrillic letters *ч*, *ш* and *ж* respectively). In Serbian, which is officially written both in Cyrillic and in Latin, the principles of transliteration are very strict. In Macedonian, there is room for some hesitation, for instance about the letters *ќ* and *џ*. We adopted for them the digraphs *kj* and *gj*, instead of *ć* and *đ*, which are often used but reflect Serbian rather than Macedonian pronunciation.

However, the system with diacritics is not typical of the Latinization of Bulgarian and Russian scripts. For them we use English-derived digraphs (*ch* for *ч*, *sh* for *ш*, *zh* for *ж* and *ts* for *ц*). The *y* stands for the *ѣ* in Bulgarian and in Russian, but also for the *ѣ* in Russian Cyrillic: a small inconvenience triggered by our preference for a more practical “English” transliteration. Accordingly, the *ю* and *я* are transliterated as *yu* and *ya*. The Russian soft sign (*ь*) is denoted with an apostrophe (*'*). This system seems to be the most popular one for these languages and, at least in Bulgaria, it is currently favored by law. However, as the same system does not distinguish between the vowel *a* and the *schwa* (*ə*), we use the character *ǎ* for the latter (namely, for what is *ѐ* in the Bulgarian Cyrillic).

The principles of Latin transliteration of the Greek script are also far from obvious. We abandoned both the classicist transliteration in an Ancient Greek manner (for instance, *η* Latinized as *e*) and the hypertrophic imitation of the modern Greek phonetics (with, for instance, the digraph *dh* for *δ*). We tried to follow a middle road. For instance, *η* is transliterated as *i*, but the ancient diphthongs *αι*, *ει* and *οι* are denoted by *ai*, *ei* and *oi*. Although this does not reflect the modern pronunciation, it makes possible some visual recognition of the Greek form, which would otherwise be difficult with the introduction of *e*, *i* and *i* respectively.

Of course, we have retained the spelling of well-known geographical names (such as *Sofia* instead of “Sofiya”).

FOREWORD

This book is part of a series of studies on the transnational and entangled history of the Balkans. The first volume explored interrelations and entanglements between Balkan nations in a process of formation and languages in a process of mutual articulation and codification. This volume examines the transfer and adaptation of ideas (ideologies) and institutions in the region.

The imports and transfers took place in several stages. They began in the late Ottoman period in the form of ideas, material items and “fashion,” and new styles and manners. The establishment of nation-states was accompanied by massive transfers, the master form of the nation-state itself, constitutions and laws, and the political system of liberalism. The transfers continued throughout the interwar period in new forms, even as “autochthonist” trends arose and a “third way” was sought between East and West, capitalism and communism. After World War II the Soviet Union imposed its system and ideology on several Balkan states, though later they developed individual forms of national communism. In fact, the processes of transfer and adaptation continue to this day, with the accession of one country after another to the European Union and under the impact of globalization.

The ideological and institutional transfers came mostly from Western Europe and partly from Russia (such as the populist—*narodnik*—ideas) and the Soviet Union (communism). The intensity of reciprocal regional influences and network exchanges differed from one ideological current or political movement to another and from case to case. Generally speaking, it was stronger in agrarianism, fascism and national communism—that is, for ideologies that could draw on certain pre-existing social conditions or ideological traditions, now reformulated to serve new visions. In fact, some of the “traditions” were ideas borrowed earlier and naturalized, most notably the national ideas, now experienced as indigenous. It was weaker in liberalism and socialism—ideologies that were closely associated with the paragon of the “West”—so that asymmetrical communication between the “core” and the “periphery” prevailed over exchange between and within peripheries. Sometimes the experiences of neighbors were taken into consideration in formulating one’s own ideas and shaping one’s own policies, as was the case with the agrarian and socialist move-

ments. A negative stance toward neighbors also resulted in interdependence and reciprocity, for instance under (national) communism. In all these cases special attention has been paid to the channels and agents of transfers and receptions.

In dealing with the transfers (or imports), the authors have tried to avoid the usual judgment that there was something wrong or deficient about the way they were transplanted and functioned in the new and different conditions. Instead, the authors have attempted a more neutral (and fairer) treatment in terms of accommodation and hybridization with local practices and conditions, “domestication” and naturalization. Imports (transfers) cannot be expected to function like the models in their original context, and divergences and transmutations due to mixing with the local practices are normal.

The highly divergent local conditions put their stamp on the ideas taken from afar. In fact, these conditions themselves varied greatly from country to country, producing various blends with the imports. Thus socialist ideas from industrial societies underwent significant modifications when “translated” in agrarian conditions, as did liberalism when introduced in a “patriarchal” milieu. Such ideas assumed a life of their own in the receiver society, evolved in the course of time, and acquired specific meanings. Interesting examples of “hybridization” between the foreign and the local include Serbian liberalism and radicalism, Bulgarian agrarianism, reformist socialism and national communism. Notwithstanding the imports, there were some distinctly homegrown ideologies, particularly some agrarian and fascist currents.

All ideologies under examination in this volume—liberal, socialist, agrarian, fascist and communist—revolve around one central issue: the adaptation to modernity and the paths of national development. Presented side by side, they lay bare the wide range of debates over the “right path” these societies should follow in a world undergoing continuous transformation and posing major challenges to their identity, stability and even survival. All this produced various modernities in the region, even though these were most often experienced as deficient, stunted and “backward.” “Tradition” itself often functioned as a rhetorical cover for actual innovations.

The opening chapter (and introduction) deals with the debates and discourses that the various transfers and imports occasioned in the receiver societies. We try to distance ourselves from the highly critical debates of “forms without substance” conducted in the wake of great upheavals and dislocations and from the revolutionist versus evolutionist (conservative)

stances and the search for a “third way.” The paradox of these debates is the inherently transnational makeup of the “national options” adopted. In this sense the Balkans present a true laboratory for the transnational study of ideational visions, political movements and developmental strategies in the modern era. There follow chapters on liberalism, socialism, agrarianism, fascism and (national) communism. There is no need to recapitulate the contents of the separate chapters. Suffice it to say that the authors do not claim comprehensiveness in any way, and when treating a certain issue, only select cases are considered. The overall focus on local adaptations and ideological inventions aims to reshuffle the perspective from one that promotes hegemonistic comparisons between Western and non-Western realms towards one that seeks to unravel the hidden strings of transfers and the mechanisms of their domestication in their national and transnational dimensions. In general, the book probes the possibilities for exploring the region from a transnational point of view and indicates where this approach might be applied.

The studies in this volume share several features. Each of them, and all of them together, reveal the intraregional variety of ideological adaptations defined by national and transnational factors. They bring together ongoing theoretical and methodological debates on the study of ideologies and empirical research embedded in particular social and cultural-political contexts. Even when they do not discuss it explicitly, the individual chapters, and especially the volume as a whole, unveil the entanglement and mutual conditioning of ideologies—for instance, between liberalism, nationalism and radicalism; between agrarianism, populism and socialism; and between fascism, the radical right and conservatism—percolations marked by both conflict and affiliation. This moves the discussion away from the traditional “history of ideas” to one mindful of historically evolved hybrids and of local dynamics. Finally, all the studies try to steer between the generic and the particular aspects of the given ideologies, between national specifics and international (regional and European) connectivity, without privileging either.

The authors of this volume are the core group of the Entangled Balkans project: Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova, Constantin Iordachi, Alexander Vezenkov and Tchavdar Marinov. The chapter on socialism was written by Blagovest Njagulov. The copyediting was done by Chris Springer, to whom we owe thanks for his dedicated work. We would also like to cordially thank the editor-in-chief of Brill’s Balkan Studies Library, Zoran Milutinović, for going far beyond his official duties in working with us. Additionally, we thank the anonymous peer reviewers for their very

positive reviews. The whole enterprise was made possible by a generous advanced research grant from the European Research Council (Grant Agreement no. 230177) under the European Community's Seventh Framework Program (FP/2007–2013). We would like to express our deepest gratitude to the ERC for supporting our endeavor.

Finally, we would like to announce that there will be a third volume in the series, dedicated to questions of how legacies in the Balkans were appropriated and divided by historiographies often at war with each other. Paradoxically, it is in debates on such issues that the interconnectedness and entanglements of the Balkan peoples appear most clearly.

“FORMS WITHOUT SUBSTANCE”: DEBATES ON THE TRANSFER OF WESTERN MODELS TO THE BALKANS

Diana Mishkova and Roumen Daskalov

Modern European (“Western”) civilization exerted an increasing influence upon the Balkan peoples under Ottoman rule during the Enlightenment, especially during the decline of the Ottoman Empire and the ensuing attempts at reform. Although contacts and exchange with the rest of Europe never ceased, starting in the late eighteenth century, if not before, their intensity and impact grew to unprecedented proportions.¹ The imports from the “West” ran the gamut from material goods to the mental and spiritual sphere: clothes, furniture and various products; knowledge, ideas and technical devices; and forms of social behavior, attitudes and values. This influence traveled through diverse channels, including tradesmen from within the Balkans and from émigré colonies, intellectuals educated abroad, foreign diplomats and travelers, Catholic and Protestant missionaries, invading armies and Ottoman reformers. Western influence came in both direct and mediated forms. One characteristic instance of the latter was the Russian occupation of the Romanian principalities, which not only brought in Western and especially French culture, in the form of French dress and French as the language of polite society, but also introduced “enlightened constitutionalism.” Another such example was the Greek enlighteners and nationalists who transmitted Western ideologies to the Bulgarians and Romanians.² Europeanization was mostly a “natural” process of imitation and emulation of the more advanced. But in other instances it was a deliberate plan to match European supremacy (the Ottoman reforms of the Tanzimat era) or a tactical move to enlist (or “manipulate”) allies in Europe in support of a given national-political

¹ Leften Stavrianos, “The Influence of the West on the Balkans,” in *The Balkans in Transition*, eds. Charles and Barbara Jelavich (Hamden, CT: Archon, 1974), 184–226.

² Diana Mishkova, “Domesticating Modernity: Transfer of Ideologies and Institutions in Southeastern Europe,” in: *Konflikt und Koexistenz. Die Rechtsordnungen Südosteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Bd. I: Rumänien, Bulgarien, Griechenland, eds. Jani Kirov, Gerd Bender und Michael Stolleis (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2014).

cause.³ The influence continued in new forms and increased in intensity after the establishment of the Balkan nation-states, which adopted contemporary Western institutions and laws; ideologies; and intellectual, artistic and other currents. The orientation toward Western models and the abundance of Western imports inevitably provoked a reaction within the recipient country. This reaction could not reverse the irresistible trend toward “Europeanization” but was able to mitigate it.⁴

We will deal here with the reception and adaptation of characteristic imports and especially with the reaction they provoked within the recipient societies. This reaction was manifested in debates about the borrowing of Western objects, ideas and practices as well as their relation to the “native” (“indigenous”) tradition. The reaction ranged from thoroughly positive to totally negative and was sometimes accompanied by the promotion of an alternative path of development. At their heart, these were debates about the modes of domesticating political and social modernity, insofar as modernization and modernity—if we consider only their meta-forms such as the nation and the nation-state—were not originally driven by processes of local dynamics but were imposed, induced or borrowed “from without” (Western and Central Europe) and “above” (through the agency of the state).

While allowing for certain typological and chronological “overlapping,” we can identify several distinct phases through which these debates proceeded and whose context largely influenced their dynamics. The first phase, from the late eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, spans the era of the formation of modern Balkan nationalism—the

³ To quote the architect of the Romanian state, the politician and historian Mihail Kogălniceanu: “Europe gives its sympathies to and supports only countries that aspire to align their institutions with those of the civilized world. . . . [T]o show Europe our desire to Europeanize our country will be to attract the sympathies and support of the Great Powers and of foreign public opinion.” Cited in Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 35.

⁴ The specifics of the Ottoman imperial legacy notwithstanding, this process was hardly unique to the Balkans. As one analyst observed, “In the modern era every society has had to find a way to confront the enormous energy produced by industrialism, the integrating and dominating power of capitalism, the corrosive ideal of equality, and the organizing demands of the state system. And no society has been able to choose an optimum way to face the challenge. Each has had to confront unique and overpowering pressures with whatever socio-cultural tools it already had at its disposal when the whirlwind struck, even if these were inappropriate for interacting fully with the new forces”: Gale Stokes, *Three Eras of Political Change in Eastern Europe* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 74–75.

emergence of the ideology of nationhood, of the national movements and of national consciousness as a cultural-political project. Receptivity to European ideas among earlier generations of Balkan intellectuals and political activists, especially during the pre-independence period, was closely related to critical attitudes toward Ottoman society, whereby aspirations to social change and political emancipation often took the form of cultural criticism pushing for the adoption of "European" culture and institutions. Hence in this phase, the attitude toward European imports in the material and intellectual sphere was mainly positive, although opinions differed on the speed of certain innovations and their adaptability to the "good national traditions." Under these circumstances the first apprehensions were also expressed about the impact of the imported novelties, voiced in the language of a "critique of fashion crazes," which intensified in the next phase.

The second phase, from around the 1860s to World War I, coincides with the establishment and the consolidation of the institutions of the nation-state (even if the Balkan states emerged at different points in time) and the first serious attempts at "modernization from above." That period was marked by an intensive "import" of the institutions of political modernity (such as legal codes, bureaucracy, armies and political parties) and rapid structural transformation of the political-institutional framework, while implementing various state-driven programs of social and cultural reform (mainly in the areas of education, land ownership, transport and communications infrastructure, industry and taxation). However, it was widely held that the transformation and adaptation of the Balkan societies and cultures of the time lagged far behind the transformation of their political infrastructure and legal framework. This engendered the first unambiguously critical responses to the application of "foreign models," which were typically labeled "forms without substance." Ubiquitous *Realpolitik* solutions to issues of imperial sovereignty and national emancipation after 1848 and the effects of the economic crisis of the 1870s, on the other hand, further shattered the hopes previously pinned on top-down modernization, *bona-fide* institutional import and international solidarity. The turn of the century marked this shift from a generally optimistic and enthusiastic adoption of Western institutions toward more sober and ambivalent, if not yet truly gloomy, attitudes toward the prospects of imported modernization. It was in this context that the contemporary stage and the future of native development were contrasted with the "Western path," eventually the shift to gloomy attitudes would become radicalized as a "third way" solution in the wake of World War I.

The interwar period, especially the 1930s, forms a distinct phase in the debates around the Western models, proper paths of development and the national identity. This phase was marked by general disenchantment with the West and a turn toward “native” sources for inspiration. The critique of the West was radicalized; in the most pessimistic accounts it was seen as decadent and not worth following. At the same time, ideas and institutional arrangements pointing toward authoritarianism and state intervention were borrowed from Europe (Italy, Germany), so that the critique actually (and somewhat anachronistically) targeted the prewar liberal West and its universalist and progressivist values.

The following survey will be organized around four rhetorical figures that were pivotal in structuring the debates: “critique of fashion crazes”; “forms without substance”; “paths of development” (and the “third way”); and “return to the native.” They correspond roughly to the phases mentioned above and reflect the central preoccupations with, respectively: the importation of only the external “veneer” of civilization (“critique of fashion crazes”); the malfunctioning of the imported institutions (“forms without substance”); the proper path of development and a quest for alternatives (“third way”); and the preservation of cultural/national authenticity (“return to the native”). They functioned simultaneously as rhetorical tools, logical constructs and arguments, and implicit projects for change. Needless to say, an earlier figure could persist into the next period, and a later one could be “prefigured” in previous debates, yet the relative prevalence of each at a certain time can be easily discerned.

Two limitations of this work should be mentioned that result primarily from lack of space and competence. We will not deal with the position of the Orthodox clergy/Church, which was historically the earliest reaction against the Western influences. We will also not deal with Ottoman Muslim society, which was exposed to the same influences, provoking similar, and perhaps more negative, reactions.

“CRITIQUE OF THE FASHION CRAZES”

The early reactions against Western influences and imports in the Balkans often took the form of a critique of foreign “fashions,” as contemporaries called them. “Fashion” here is generalized—and was so at the time—to include, besides fashion in the narrow sense of dress and other material items, the use of foreign languages (or words), new manners and attitudes, new conventions and lifestyle. The critique addressed alien,

mechanistically or "mindlessly" adopted cultural imports and influences, but it did not crystallize into a coherent and encompassing critical stance, let alone critical theory, towards Western innovations or institutions. The debates under this rubric were typical of the pre-independence period, which lasted until different dates for the various Balkan peoples, but continued to resurface periodically thereafter. Their social underpinning was the emerging conflict, or rather what was articulated as a conflict, between city and country, the rural ("authentic") and the urban ("alien," "inorganic") way of life—a dichotomy that would enjoy a long career in all regional cultures. The "critique of fashion crazes" (or cultural critique) was initially and most conspicuously voiced against the wearing of fashionable European clothes, especially by women, but also against manners and practices of civility, such as hand-kissing and courting of women, walking arm-in-arm, paying visits on invitation (*soirées*) and dances such as the waltz, quadrille and mazurka, as well as the use of foreign, especially French, words. More often than not the innovations came, directly or via intermediaries, from France. Thus fashion was generalized as *à la franca* (in the French manner) or "Frenchism" (*franțuzism*), irrespective of where the customs actually came from.⁵ There was a tone of derision and irony in descriptions such as the following (from, respectively, 1857 and 1871):

We still have not forgotten the times when our Bulgarian heads were shaved like gourds and covered with fur caps [*kalpak*] while the head honored with a broadcloth hat was considered nobler; these were replaced by turbans [*chalma*] and then came the long fezzes and then the small violet fezes of today. You see what a success was achieved in the course of twenty-five years in our headgear, but did such a success occur in our brains? Let everybody ask himself this question.⁶

In fact, among these newly awakened peoples, a person fashionably dressed in *pantalon* [French for "trousers"] and a *gerok* [coat, from the German *Geroack*], with a watch on a *cordon* [French for "chainlet"], a *pardessus* hung over one hand and a small walking stick in the other, in gloves and shiny shoes, and if he knows a few French or German words, passes for an educated man—worldly-wise. Likewise a woman adorned with a puffy *costume à la mode*, a feathery *palton* [coat] and hair made up in the most recent fashion—in a *bun* or with *curls*, with a wide-brimmed hat above the

⁵ About the "à la franga" fashion among the Bulgarians, see Nikolay Genchev, *Frantsiya v bălgarskoto duhovno vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Kliment Ohridski," 1979), 385, 395–412. The "à la franga" fashion started in the 1840s but became particularly widespread after the Crimean War (1853–1856).

⁶ *Tsarigradski vestnik*, 1857, no. 313, cited in Genchev, *Frantsiya v bălgarskoto*, 399.

eyebrows, in pinched shoes, stretched gloves, silky umbrella and a golden watch on a long golden *cordon*—is a veritable *madame* or *demoiselle*. A man and a woman taking a walk arm-in-arm are already at the height of *civilization*.⁷

The critique of fashion crazes had a deeper dimension; in effect it represented a critique of the external and superficial (and purely imitative) “civilizing,” which did not constitute real progress. Clothes and manners are a quintessential metaphor of the external—the “appearances” or “looks”—and of the false (and defective) way of civilizing: in “appearances” only, not in “essence.” In his play *Civilization Wrongly Understood* (1871), quoted above, the Bulgarian playwright Dobri Voynikov (1833–1878) ridiculed the false ideas about things European, in which, as he wrote in the introduction, “the consequence is misunderstood for the cause itself, the reflection for the very essence,” while “fashion is taken for civilization.”⁸ It should be noted that the critique here was targeted not at the “European” quality itself, which enjoyed unquestionable prestige, but at its superficial and “distorted” understanding. The image of a monkey “aping” the gestures of others without comprehending their true meaning was often evoked to signify this superficial borrowing and appropriation of “appearances” alone. The Bulgarian national activist and well-known writer Petko Slaveykov (1827–1895) called this “monkey-like imitation” and the “craze of aping.”⁹ The same term—*maimuțăria*—was used by Ioan Maiorescu when sharply criticizing, in 1838, the “monkey-like imitation of things foreign, the inordinate love for everything foreign and especially French,” and declared that he would never covet an “external form” [*formă din afară*].¹⁰ Periklis

⁷ Dobri Voynikov, “Krivorazbranata tsivilizatsiya,” in Dobri Voynikov, *Izbrani proizvedeniya* (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1978), 87–170, esp. 87–88 (first edition, Bucharest, 1871, 1). In a similarly humorous vein, see also Petko Slaveykov, “Novata moda,” in Petko Slaveykov, *Săchineniia v osem toma*, vol. 7 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1978–1980), 270–273 (first published in *Ruzhitsa*, no. 2 [1871]). See also Rayko Zhinzifov, “Na drugozemetsăt,” in Rayko Zhinzifov, *Za obshta mayka, za Bălgariya* (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1989), 84–86 (first published in *Bratski trud* 4, no. 45 [1862]); Rayko Zhinzifov, “Evropaizăm v Shumen,” in Zhinzifov, *Za obshta maika*, 87–89.

⁸ Voynikov, *Krivorazbranata*, 87. In the play itself the “distorted” understanding of European civilization and progress is shown to consist of wearing fashionable clothes, looking through a lorgnette, fashionable dances, “loose” morals and manners, courtly compliments to women and the use of French phrases in a conversation.

⁹ Petko Slaveykov, “Dneshnoto sătoyanie,” in Slaveykov, *Săchineniia*, vol. 7, 330–332, esp. 331 (initially published in *Chitalishte* 3, no. 1 [1872]).

¹⁰ Ioan Maiorescu, “Correspondență din Craiova,” in *Foaie literară*, no. 16, (April 16, 1838), 121–123, cited in Adrian Marino, “Din istoria teoriei ‘formă fără fond,’” *Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară*, vol. 19 (Iași, 1968), 185–188.

Yannopoulos described, from a strongly conservative position, the Greek's adoration of things foreign (*xenomania*) in a similar way:

He imitates a European, but he has no connection with the European, and his head is nothing like today's European head. Our Westernized man [*Esperioeidis*] is like the Arab who goes to Paris and wears Parisian clothes. He is an adorer of things foreign, because if you take this from him, there is nothing left of him. Take away his clothes, the four foreign words, the drinking of tea, the ten names that he keeps repeating, the ten ideas that he has learned, and let him act. He is not able to think and to do even the smallest thing. He is a worthless mind, a completely useless head. His whole life, his whole strength, his whole wisdom consists in saying and repeating the four things that he has learned.¹¹

One can encounter insights in the sociological mechanism of the imitation (presaging Gabriel Tarde's *Les lois de l'imitation*), whereby the upper social strata and the returnees from abroad imitating the "Europeans" were, in turn, followed and imitated by the lower layers; the novelties thus spread "downwards." Accordingly the critique was extended to those who had put on European airs and paraded with European clothes, manners, or knowledge without real comprehension of, or even interest in, foreign culture.¹²

Tellingly, Western European "Orientalists" and local critics were basically united in their assessment that contact with Western civilization had resulted in the embrace of its vices, not its benefits and values. And the richer the "copycats," the more preposterous the result. An English observer described the symptoms of moral decay among the Romanian boyar class in the following terms: "They confound whatever is most degrading in luxury with the fair fruit of civilization, and in their rude adoption of European manners, they plunge into promiscuous debauchery."¹³ The Frenchman Albert Malet, a tutor of Serbian king Aleksandar Obrenović, commented in 1893 on the "parody of our West" that the Europeanization of Serbia had produced: "The external luster of civilization is what testifies

¹¹ Periklis Yannopoulos, "I Xenomania," *O Noumas*, no. 5, January 16, 1903.

¹² Petko Slaveykov, "Petna v nashiya obshtestven zhivot," in Slaveykov, *Săchineniya*, vol. 7, 24–28 (initially published in *Makedoniya* 5 [1871], no. 4). See also Lyuben Karavelov, "Otivat pateta, a se vrăshat găski," in Lyuben Karavelov, *Săbrani săchineniya v dvanadeset toma*, vol. 5 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1985), 335–340 (initially published in *Nezavisimost* 4 [1874], no. 13).

¹³ William MacMichael, *Journey from Moscow to Constantinople in the Years of 1817, 1818* (London: John Murray, 1818), 118, cited in Victor Taki, "Moldavia and Wallachia in the Eyes of Russian Observers in the First Half of the 19th Century," *East Central Europe/ECE* 32 (2005), nos. 1–2, 113.

in favor of the Serbs and what deceives a passing foreigner. The luster of civilization, cracking in a thousand places, is what is revealed to anyone who could examine everything without hurry and in detail, thus turning him into an opponent of the initial false image."¹⁴

The parody of adopting the luster of European modernity without its material base and motivation was formulated thus by the aforementioned Petko Slaveykov:

We live in Europe but we are not European, we put on European clothes, but we have not taken off the ignorance. We see and aspire to progress, but we still do not understand the foundations on which it rests and the means by which it is set in motion. . . . These and other things we have not as yet understood; and, above all, what is needed is work, activity, vigor! . . . As for now, with our clothes, with our ridiculous claims to Europeaness [*evropeystvo*], we are nothing but an anachronism in Europe.¹⁵

As late as 1902, Jovan Skerlić (1877–1914), a leading Serbian literary historian and Westernizer, kept drawing attention to the persisting divergence between “appearances,” or trappings, and “essences,” or the driving forces of a genuine culture:

There are many people who recite litanies against the “rotten West,” who talk about some “Serbian” or “Slav culture” with inspiration, while they have received from the same “rotten West” their clothes, their habits, institutions, appetites, but they have not received that which makes the West great, and what it can teach us well: the feeling of personal dignity, freedom, initiative, a serene, active and steady spirit—which created all Western civilization.¹⁶

Opinions nonetheless were not necessarily consensual on all counts, particularly on the actual relationship between “outer” emulation and “inner” transformation. There were those like Alecu Russo (1819–1859), one of

¹⁴ Albert Malet, *Dnevnik sa srbskog dvora. 1892–1894* (Belgrade: Clio, 1999), 204. For other testimonies about the disparity between form and substance in Serbia, see Latinka Perović, “Serbia v modernizatsionnykh protsessakh XIX–XX vekov,” in *Chelovek na Balkanakh. Sotsiokul’turnye izmereniya protsessa modernizatsii na Balkanakh (seredina XIX—seredina XX v.)*, ed. R.P. Grishina (St. Petersburg: Aletea, 2007), 16–40, esp. 19–22. Observations of contemporary Russian commentators are collected in *Russkie o Serbii i serbakh*, ed. A.L. Shemyakin (St. Petersburg: Aletea, 2006).

¹⁵ Petko Slaveykov, “De sme i kak sme?” in Slaveykov, *Săchineniia*, vol. 5, 229 (initially published in *Gayda* 3 [1866], no. 7). In a similar sense Petko Slaveykov, “Osnovite na dneshnata tsivilizatsiia,” in Slaveykov, *Săchineniia*, vol. 5, 398–401 (initially published in *Makedoniia* 1 [1867], no. 35).

¹⁶ Jovan Srerlić, *Feljtomi, skice i govori* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1964), 66–67, cited in Zoran Milutinović, *Getting over Europe: The Construction of Europe in Serbian Culture* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2011), 73.

the leading figures of the Romanian 1848 generation and an opponent of impetuous Western imports, for whom the switch from Oriental to European dress in the first half of the nineteenth century was not merely a matter of fashion but an expression of a deeper conversion in mentality and society. Modern Romanian society and its institutions, Russo maintained, were being born simultaneously with the change in garments:

A harbinger of the modern history of the Romanian lands is inevitably the change of clothing. Contemporary civilization is a logical act of relinquishing the old attire. The new ideas invaded our country together with the trousers, more frightening than Tartar invasions; as fast as you could light a fire, they burned down *șacșări, șlicuri, mestii, giubele* [items of traditional Romanian dress] and the whole ancient wardrobe.¹⁷

The actual stakes in the change of appearances were, therefore, important precisely because it was rightly sensed that appearances could change essences. Foreign borrowings and imitations were deemed to be signs of estrangement from one's national character and subversion of the traditional foundations of communal life, all the more so as the model of emulation represented a huge contrast to the existing lifestyle. They were thus acutely perceived as leading to the demoralization and dissolution of the community and engendered "conservative" moral critiques even on behalf of modernizing (and enlightened) national activists:

The greater our so-called civilizing and tinting in the same hue as Europe, and the more, together with the study of foreign languages, we come to know the peculiar life of the older nations, the more one feels the vanishing of the simplicity and the sobriety that had distinguished our private life before. The blind rush to catch up with the foreigners and to become exactly as they are has made us contemptuous of what is our own and to dislike everything that is ours. The more we supposedly advance, the further we move away from the life of our fathers and grandfathers and the nearer we come to our ruin without being aware of it, and even in the false belief that we are catching up with those that we see ahead of us on the path of life.... The desire and diligence of our people to educate itself, the love for everything new which has seized it, without the requisite strict religious and moral instruction, became and are increasingly becoming tools of corruption and disintegration rather than of moral improvement...¹⁸

¹⁷ Alecu Russo, *Studie moldovană* (1851), http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Studie_moldovan%C4%83 (accessed February 29, 2012).

¹⁸ Slaveykov, "Dneshnoto sâstoyanie," 330. In a moralistic vein, see also Dobri Voynikov, *Krivorazbranata*, 88–89. Voynikov deplored, among other things, the weakening of religion and of respect for older people, as well as the shamelessness in relations between young people.

"Nothing links us with our past anymore," Alecu Russo lamented in the same vein, "yet without a past, society is crippled. The nations that lost connection with their forefathers' customs are unstable nations or, as the popular saying goes, neither fish nor flesh."¹⁹ On this point, in fact, the traditional elites' social conservatism is hard to distinguish from the concerns of the emerging nationalist elites. Breaches in pre-existing customs and the undermining of the traditional way of life would not have been experienced as so harmful and dangerous had they not been perceived as a threat to the national consciousness, right at the time when it was being constructed and consolidated. Above all, it was the craving for national determination and a distinct national individuality ("identity," as we would call it today) that engendered anxiety over opening wide to foreign influences and imitation. As Slaveykov dramatically framed it: "to cease to exist as a people—we who are only just beginning to revive our national life!"²⁰ Such apprehensions seem to have been at the root of the cultural criticism of "Europeanization" by enlightened elites and national "awakeners" who had undertaken to build the national consciousness. As early as 1806, an ardent call for freedom for the Greeks equated foreign "appearances," the imitation of foreigners and marriages to foreigners with treason and moral decay:

So little do they [the Greek merchants] care for our motherland that most of them make every effort to imitate the bad morals of foreigners, so as no longer to be known as Greeks. . . . If any one of them understands a foreign language, then they read with pleasure the dramas of the theatres, or more precisely, meaningless poets, but they consider perhaps Plutarch and Xenophon to be Americans. . . . But what can I say about those who, to our misfortune, are not few, who to estrange themselves for ever from Greece and to forget even its name, have decided with extreme foolishness to take a foreign woman in a foreign land for a wife. O unbearable shame! [. . .] But what, I wonder, prompts you to take a foreigner for a wife. Is Greece perhaps short of girls? Has Aphrodite, perhaps, fled from her first temple? What has so blinded you, so that the painted and most impudent faces of the most immoral foreigners . . . appear to you more beautiful?²¹

¹⁹ Alecu Russo, *Studie moldovană*.

²⁰ *Chtlalishte* 3, no. 1 (1872), 31. There were some, like Rayko Zhinzifov, who opposed all sorts of cultural imports (dress, dances, languages, foreign words) from an openly Slavophile position in the name of the preservation of traditional patriarchal morality.

²¹ *Elliniki Nomarkhia, itoi logos peri Eleftherias . . . Syntetheis te kai typois ekdotheis . . . pros opheleian ton Ellinon. Para Anonymou tou Ellinos* (Italy, 1806), cited in *The Movement for Greek Independence 1770–1821: A Collection of Documents*, ed. Richard Clogg (London: Macmillan, 1976), 106–117. This anonymous treatise is conventionally attributed to Joannis

The aim of such diatribes against the "foreign assimilation" of rich and foreign-educated Greek youth was to help engineer a social transformation: to mobilize all the resources of upper-class Greeks ("rich in money and useful ideas"), inside and outside the Empire, to secure the nation's advancement and the freedom that the "immoral foreigners" enjoyed.

Censures of this kind are often inherently ambiguous and inconsistent, combining admiration for the West's progress (and rejection of "Oriental" backwardness) and fear over the "contamination" of the nation with Western influence and "cosmopolitanism." The building of a national identity and cohesiveness was essentially a two-part process involving imitation and competition at the same time. The same ambivalence characterized the paradoxical logic that underlay the formation of national ideologies: the very idea of nationhood and the discourses of national uniqueness were forged in a context of intense international exchanges and a shared matrix of producing difference.²² The universalization of the notion and the discourse of national uniqueness and the existence of a narrative of national authenticity available and utilized across Europe drew its authority precisely because it applied transnationally, and national uniqueness was conveyed to the international audience through a common "European" language. It was thus the transnational discourses, exchange and entanglements that shaped and legitimated nations and established their supposed differences. Reflecting on the "critical spirit in the Romanian culture" (as he titled his 1909 book), Garabet Ibrăileanu might have had something similar in mind when stating that "Western influence and the ascendance of Romanian culture took place at the same time."²³

That being said, it is important to note the significant differences between the moderate (conservative) liberal and the radical liberal currents regarding the relationship between the national and the foreign, the traditional and the modern. When radical liberals like the Bulgarian revolutionary and man of letters Lyuben Karavelov (1834/5–1879) advocated the peoples' right to "their own national development, their own internal self-rule corresponding to their national customs and character,"

Kolettis (1773–1847), activist in the Greek War of Independence and future Greek prime minister.

²² See, for example, Anne-Marie Thiesse, "National Identities: A Transnational Paradigm," in *Revisiting Nationalism: Theories and Processes*, eds. A. Dieckhoff and Ch. Jaffrelot (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 122–143; Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006).

²³ Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Spiritual critic în cultura românească* (Iași: Viața Românească, 1922) (first published in 1908), 6.

they did so not in order to preserve the inherited tradition, but on behalf of the “principle of nationality” prescribing that each nationality should “rule itself according to its proper rights and customs and protect its language and identity from foreign influence.”²⁴ More notably still, they saw little reason for concern on the subject of Western imports and emulation: “Each imitation and innovation, including fashions, is good for the nation’s life”; inevitably, “each nation starts out first by adopting what is shining from the outside, and only afterwards it transforms its brains as well. Each society should go through the fashion disease . . .” It was, however, up to the critics to “leave only what brings in positive and unequivocal benefit.”²⁵

On the same radical liberal grounds the Serbian modernist Jovan Skerlić, quoted above, attacked “the so-called ‘men of the people,’” the populist Serbian Radicals:

The fate of democracy in Serbia depends on uprooting that patriarchal conservatism and reactionary demagoguery, which leads to all that is bad not only in radicalism but in our entire political life. And from this point of view, it is possible to say with full justification: democracy in Serbia will either be European, or will not be at all. [...] and for us there is only one cure: to open wide our doors to the West and its ideas, the West which thinks, which acts, which creates, which lives a full and intensive life, the only one worthy of being called human life.²⁶

Differences of opinion on this issue came to divide the otherwise quite coherent Westernizing, French-oriented Romanian liberal camp as well. The view that modernization should not be a process of mere imitation but present a synthesis between European and traditional local structures already originated with the generation of 1848—the one that was later blamed by the conservatives for putting Romania on the road of “indiscriminate” Westernization. Many leading representatives of this Europeanized revolutionary generation—such as Costache Negruzzi, Alecu Russo, Vasile Alecsandri, Costache Negri, Mihail and Alecu Kogălniceanu, Ion Ionescu de la Brad, Heliade Rădulescu, Ion Ghica and B.P. Hasdeu—attacked blind emulation by pointing to the unsuitable, underdeveloped conditions of their society. They demanded respect for the positive national

²⁴ Lyuben Karavelov, “Kakvo ni tryabva?” *Zastava* 4, no. 32, March 14, 1869; *Svoboda* 2, no. 24, November 27, 1871.

²⁵ Lyuben Karavelov, “Krivorazbranata tsivilizatsiya,” *Svoboda* 2, no. 20, 1871.

²⁶ Cited in Ivan Čolović, *The Politics of Symbol in Serbia* (London: Hurst, 2002), 101–102.

traditions and argued for the need for selective "critical" borrowings and gradual adaptation of the achievements of civilization. As early as 1859, when the massive modern legislation was still in preparation, C. Negruzzi noted, "A simple, patriarchal people, occupied mostly with tilling of land, is in no need for such abundance of laws, which are the appanage of the civilized nations, and for such a mire of forms which often devours the contents."²⁷ Significantly, rejoinders such as these, coming from within the ranks of the modernizers, emerged in all three Romanian "provinces," Moldavia, Wallachia and Transylvania, despite their disparate historical, social and intellectual circumstances.

The divisions crystallizing around the attitudes of the educated Greeks towards Western imports were significant enough to produce two opposing camps. *Romaïos* was the term used to describe the type of Greek who represented the traditional way of life with its Ottoman imprint and attachment to folk culture and to demotic Greek. *Hellene*, by contrast, stood for those Greeks who looked to the West, stressed the classical roots of the modern Greeks, and sought to move as far as possible away from the legacy of the Ottoman era. This division, however, did not match that between "conservatives"/traditionalists and "liberals"/Europeanists, as the respective stances towards the use of (the "living") demotic Greek or (artificially archaicized) *katharevousa* as a codified literary language clearly demonstrate. Those appreciative of the West of the Enlightenment (like Adamantios Korais) turned out to be "conservative" on the issue of language, while Alexander Pallis, the translator of the Gospels into demotic, was particularly incensed over the Greeks' imitation of foreign practices. In his words, this led to "Levantinism," meaning contamination of national Greek culture by European customs and ways.²⁸

The debates on the railroads—the technical wonder of the nineteenth century and a symbol of modernity—deserve special mention in this context, as they marshal all the fears connected with the West and modernization. Indeed, they may be seen as a litmus displaying the whole spectrum of reactions against foreign novelties: from conservative moralism, often (strangely enough) mingled with laissez-faire economic attitudes,

²⁷ Adrian Marino, "Din istoria teoriei 'formă fără fond,'" *Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară*, vol. 19 (Iași, 1968), 185–187. Cf. Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul Critic în Cultura Românească*, 43–152, 208–217.

²⁸ See, among others, Gerasimos Augustinos, *Consciousness and History: Nationalist Critics of Greek Society 1897–1914* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, 1977), esp. 7–24, 149–150 note 13, 151 note 46.

to economic nationalism and protectionism, typically coupled with pro-Western political values. Even as late as the 1880s, the peasant deputies in the Serbian Skupština (National Assembly) saw railroads as a hostile force threatening the Serbian people with economic subordination to foreign capital and the traditional life-world with extinction. In the words of a priest, M. Djurić, the railroad was a “cold snake, which the Serbian people will warm in its bosom until being swallowed by it.” Thirty years later, in 1910, Djurić continued to affirm that “the snake crawling from the West” had strangled Serbia, and the simple but glorious Serb customs had succumbed to those of the Western nations.²⁹

The prominent Bulgarian poet and national (and social) revolutionary Hristo Botev (1848–1876) proclaimed himself, in 1875, against the railways. But his rationale was different. Socially, railroads, he argued, favored small interest groups—construction companies and governments—and did not benefit the people. Economically, the import of cheaply manufactured goods ruined handicrafts, while the export of raw materials impoverished the country. In terms of national security, railroads could be used by enemies for military purposes. Morally, they had a corrupting effect because they opened up the country to opportunists and the evils of civilization.³⁰ Botev’s reaction, however, was an extreme one. For most Bulgarian critics, the real question was not whether to be “for” or “against” modern technologies. Nor did they doubt the need for, and the benefits from, the modern means of transportation as such. But they were afraid that, given the economic disparities between the countries in the region and “Europe,” railroads would become an instrument of colonial expansion and domination. The small and underdeveloped economies with negligible exports risked being flooded by Western goods, which would stifle the incipient native industries. To quote another Bulgarian national leader, Todor Ikonov: “This [the railroad] is good, but not for us. Our goodwill consists of the consolation that we have helped the Europeans to derive all possible benefits from our fatherland and to turn us gradually into their slaves, if not physically, then at least mentally.”³¹ In general, the

²⁹ Cited in Andrei Shemyakin, “Sebskoe obshtestvo na rubezhe XIX–XX veka: traditsionalizm i modernizatsiya. Vzgliad iznutri,” in *Chelovek na Balkanakh*, 31–49, esp. 47–48.

³⁰ Hristo Botev, “Zheleznitsite sa vredni za nas,” in Hristo Botev, *Săchineniya v dva toma*, vol. 2 (Sofia, Bălgarski pisatel, 1986), 117–120 (initially published in *Zname* 1, no. 17 [1875]).

³¹ Todor Ikonov, “Prazdni nadezhdi,” *Turtsiya* 7, no. 34, October 9, 1871, cited in Desislava Lilova, “Barbarians, Civilized People and Bulgarians: Definition of Identity in Textbooks and the Press (1830–1878),” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity*

debate on the railroads was directed not against the project of modernity as such, but against the unequal chances of those who wanted to take part in it. It was not counter-modern but rather anti-European, in the sense of being directed against a hegemonic imperialist "West." The prescribed antidote was economic development that would make the railroads profitable for the Balkan countries as well. It was precisely the European technologies and the economic contacts with the West that confronted the Balkan elites with the most serious problem underlying the "adaptation" of the project of modernity—the enormous and conspicuous economic disparity that made Europe appear in the adverse role of a colonizer.³² As a turn-of-the-century Greek nationalist critic, Perikles Giannopoulos, graphically described it: "... all the Small States [were used] as latrines for [the West's] commercial and industrial constipation..."³³

The economic consequences of the desire for "shiny" European goods in particular became a matter of concern quite early. The gap between desired consumption and economic capacities was found to lead a backward society to wastefulness or even ruin. The import of European "fashions" was felt to be particularly destructive because it engendered new tastes, expectations and needs that could not be satisfied by local producers and led to the ruin of traditional handicrafts, as pointed out in the following passage, where it is represented as hindering actual advancement:

So the civilizing of the Bulgarian started in the wrong way: from dress to mind, from tail to head, from body to soul—and all this undermined our handicrafts because it made them superfluous for the needs of our new life and because our crafts could not adapt to our new needs, could not satisfy the demands for new garments and our new fashion requirements... Thus fashion was mistaken for progress, whereas fashion is no more a progress than the smoke of a steamship or a locomotive is its driving force.³⁴

Decades later, the problem remained the same. It was described by Bulgarian sociologist Ivan Hadzhiyski (1907–1944) as the replication of European consumption patterns without the adoption of a corresponding organization of production (and adequate capital and markets). The high consumption standards were accessible only for the higher classes. Among the social consequences of their being imitated by the intelligentsia

in *Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 200.

³² Lilova, *Barbarians, Civilized People*, 200–202.

³³ Cited in Augustinos, *Consciousness and History*, 77.

³⁴ Hristo Dimitrov, *Modata razrushava bălgarskite zanayati* (Sofia, 1900), 4–5.

and the civil servants were the escalation of spoils politics (*partizanstvo*), job hunting, corruption of civil service, demoralization of public life and social vices.³⁵

The emulation of the advanced world by the less developed has been at the core of one of the theories of underdevelopment, whereby the latter is explained by what is known as the “demonstration effect.” Essentially, this theory maintains that the more developed countries create patterns of consumption and foster aspirations among the populations in the less developed world to acquire the same goods, accompanied by a feeling of deprivation if these are not satisfied. People are not content with what they have. When it is not accompanied by an increase in production capacities, the revolution in tastes and aspirations has ruinous consequences (such as outflow of capital and diminishing of savings). Investment in the outward trappings of state power and its military might by raising loans acts in the same way. If the level of consumption demonstrated by the center cannot be reached, the feelings of frustration and deprivation in the peripheries increase, even if conditions objectively improve and consumption grows (thus indicating the relative nature of “deprivation”).³⁶ According to Andrew Janos, the proponent of this theory for Eastern Europe, the West’s lead on the road of development is one type of process, while the reaction to it in backward countries is a qualitatively different one, most often expressed as an urge for emulation that does not lead to a significant change.³⁷ What is interesting here is the “transfer” of first-hand contemporaries’ observations to later theoretical elaborations. The underdevelopment theory of the “demonstration effect” draws directly on contemporary discussions about the effects of mimetic modernization of “appearances” and the disparity between aspirations and means.

³⁵ Ivan Hadzhiyski, “Optimistichna teoriya za nashiya narod,” in Ivan Hadzhiyski, *Săchineniya v dva toma*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1974), 25–46, esp. 43–44.

³⁶ Andrew Janos, “The Politics of Backwardness in Continental Europe, 1780–1945,” *World Politics* 41, no. 3 (1989), 325–358, esp. 325–329, 355–356; Andrew Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982), 315–316.

³⁷ Andrew Janos, “Modernization and Decay in Historical Perspective: The Case of Romania,” in *Social Change in Romania, 1860–1940*, ed. Kenneth Jowitt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 72–116, esp. 74, 113–114.

"FORMS WITHOUT SUBSTANCE":
THE CRITIQUE OF IMPORTED INSTITUTIONS

Most of the Balkan nation-states were created in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through secession from the Ottoman Empire. They emerged with the help and under the auspices of the big European powers and followed contemporary Western models of state-building: constitutional monarchies, centralized state administrations, national school systems with mandatory primary education, standing armies and national cultural institutions (universities, academies, libraries and museums). Generally speaking, political Europeanization—that is, state and nation formation—was the first major sphere of actual modernization of the self-governing Balkan societies. Its priority proceeded from the widely held assumption that only the institutions that had crystallized in the leading European states could create a suitable climate for, and largely precipitate, the social and economic changes that had brought prosperity to Western societies. The apparent difficulty of this task ensued from the fact that the newly created Balkan states did not draw on, but had to assert themselves against, pre-existing political and legal institutions. Together with the ambition of the "nationally responsible" elites to gain full membership in the European club of states, it portended copious borrowing from Western political models and ideas.

These models were transferred very quickly. Within one decade, between 1860 and 1870, the nascent Romanian state adopted almost the whole package of European institutions and legislation. It was the small but strongly "Europeanized" Romanian elite, drawing heavily on the French brand of liberalism and romanticism, that presided over the unification and independence of the principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia (known since 1866 as Romania) and over Romanian modernization during the nineteenth century.³⁸ The first generation of Serb liberal modernizers who strove to curb Serbia's autocratic government was swayed by the ideas of the French post-revolutionary Left and of English parliamentarism. The German liberal doctrine and, with it, the moderate liberal reformism and the model of the Prussian-type *Rechtsstaat* prevailed over the second generation—that of the liberals in power. In Greece,

³⁸ On the mechanisms and consequences of the cultural transfer of the ideas of Romanticism, liberalism and revolutionary nationalism from France in the Romanian principalities, see Catherine Durandin, *Révolution à la française ou à la russe* (Paris: PUF, 1989).

conversely, it was the autocratic administration of the Bavarian regency and King Otho that sought to modernize the state and centralize the government against the strong resistance of local potentates. But Otho's ideal of conservative autocracy could not assert itself and was curtailed in 1843, as in Prince Miloš's Serbia in 1838, by a constitution. The rudiments of the Bulgarian state were laid down during the two years of Russian administration that followed the Russo-Turkish "war of liberation" (1877–1878). These included the adoption of a liberal constitution and the staffing of a civil service with persons trained in the rules and practices of Russian administration. The full-scale introduction of formal law took place around the turn of the century. Although most of the Bulgarian intelligentsia had studied in Russia, the Bulgarian liberals, who were broadly represented in all the major political parties, were inspired by various Western European legal and political models. For the most part, however, theirs was a kind of liberalism strongly tinged by Russian radicalism, populism and nihilism.

In all Balkan states Europe's authority, particularly regarding institutional and legal arrangements, was initially very strong, not only because these states were all the creations of great-power negotiation and bickering over spheres of influence, but above all by virtue of the European orientation of the local educated strata. As a Bulgarian author later remarked, the unconditional openness to European influences in the initial period appeared to have struck with the force of a natural disaster:

In our country it [European influence] was especially strong; what is more, in the first years after the liberation, when the last barriers between us and cultured Europe fell, it reached the force of a hurricane which shattered the entire foundations of our particular way of life and authenticity [*samobitnost*]. This was the era when foreign things were a master and a cult in our country, with no activity on our part.³⁹

The leading Serbian historian of the 1930s, Slobodan Jovanović, described a similar situation in the newly liberated Serbian principality:

Just as our first civil servants were implanted from abroad, so our first laws were translations of foreign laws and our first administrative and legal procedures were borrowed from foreign bureaus: because of all that the people slowly and painfully accommodated itself to the new authority which for a long time appeared to it to be a senseless formality and heartlessly pedantic.⁴⁰

³⁹ Boris Trichkov, "Pred istinski natsionalen izgrej," *Zlatorog* 2, no. 1–2 (1921), 53.

⁴⁰ Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1932), 17.

The state and legal institutions borrowed from the industrializing West were imposed upon agrarian societies with weak urban ("bourgeois") strata, which inevitably brought them in dissonance with the local economic and social foundations. Furthermore, the needs of state-building (such as administration, army and diplomatic service) expanded much faster than the Balkan societies' economic capacities.⁴¹ Contrary to the expectations of ardent modernizers, the institutional models and arrangements that epitomized the experience of Western societies and economies and had crystallized gradually there, could not, and did not, function in the same way in the rather different milieu where they were transferred. What emerged instead was a distinct gap between the formal (*de jure*) and actual (*de facto*) state of affairs—between *pays légal* and *pays réel*. The political and cultural leaders of the Balkan societies found themselves engaged in similar debates concerning the applicability of foreign institutional models, which may be summarized under the label "forms without substance," after the evocative formula of the Junimists in Romania. As we shall see, the notions about what was "form" ("façade," formality) and what was "substance" (or "contents") varied, but there was a constant insinuation of mismatches, discrepancies, contradictions and, as a result, malfunctions.

Tellingly, the problem emerged simultaneously with the drafting of the constitutions that sanctioned the new states and their basic institutions. The question was what arrangements would suit best the actual state and needs of the society. In a lengthy 1826 article, summarizing the views of the "nationally minded" Greeks, who clamored against the introduction of a republican regime and representative institutions on account of the political "immaturity" and long-cultivated "servile habits" of the Greeks, one reads:

In their effort to apply foreign theories to Greece, they are making our government look like the multicolored dress of Harlequin. . . . [A]dmirers, and justly so, of the harmonious laws of enlightened nations, seek to apply them to Greece, forgetting that the good law-giver must allow as much political freedom as the people for whom he makes the laws can make good use of. But when he allows more of that freedom than is advisable, the surplus becomes an agent of corruption in much the same way as a man who drinks

⁴¹ See in this sense Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1934), vol. 1, 398.

more than he can hold passes from vitality to torpor because of the strength of the liquor.⁴²

When Ioannis Kapodistrias, the first president and autocratic ruler of Greece (1828–1831), arrived on Greek soil, his first job was to annul the liberal constitution of 1827 on the same grounds: “the statesman who introduces into every country the same institutions regardless of its people’s life and culture is as inept and destructive as the physician who prescribes the same diet for every patient, no matter what his constitution and ailment.”⁴³

Skepticism of this sort was voiced from diametrically opposite positions. The Bulgarian liberal-populist Petko Slaveykov elaborated his views at length in a speech against the creation of a second chamber (Senate) during the debates on the Bulgarian constitution in the Constituent National Assembly of 1879. He agreed that the emulation and the use of foreign models could be good and even beneficial. However, he noted, foreign forms and institutional arrangements should not be accepted blindly and carelessly, but in a rational way and after deliberation on the nation’s specific needs and conditions, whereby all that was unsuitable had to be rejected. As he put it, one should consider whether “someone else’s hat will fit one’s head as nicely as one had liked it on the other’s head.” The Bulgarian people, he said, should not be afraid to reject what it deemed unsuitable for itself and should be careful not to become “a captive of the taste of another nation and a servant to someone else’s needs,” but have the courage to demonstrate originality and independence, all the more so because a form, just like a fashion, once introduced “becomes tyrannical and irresistible.”⁴⁴ One can clearly see here the transition from the problem of the foreign “fashions” (evoked by the hat) to the problem of the foreign “forms,” that is, the institutions of the newly established nation-state.

The “forms vs. substance” trope was developed at length (and quite early) by the literary circle Junimea (Youth) in Romania, which emerged in 1863 in Iași around Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917) and the journal *Convorbiri literare* (Literary Conversations) and which also included Petre Carp,

⁴² Cited in John Koliopoulos and Thanos Veremis, *Greece: The Modern Sequel* (London: Hurst, 2002), 36.

⁴³ Cited in Nicholas Kaltchas, *Introduction to the Constitutional History of Modern Greece* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 65.

⁴⁴ Petko Slaveykov, “Rech protiv Senata,” in Slaveykov, *Săchineniya*, vol. 7, 610–620, esp. 610–614 (from Minutes XVII of the Constituent Assembly, March 27, 1879).

Vasile Pogor and Theodor Rosetti and later on the historian Alexandru Xenopol, the philosopher Vasile Conta and others. The circle constituted the vanguard of the Romanian intellectual elite until around 1885, when most of them moved to Bucharest. From then on their literary influence began to decline as their political influence simultaneously grew. From the early 1880s, owing mostly to the activities of the group's political leader, Petre Carp (1837–1919), Junimea became a political ally, ideological reservoir and supplier of programs for the Romanian Conservatives. It was, however, the Junimists' social-critical stance regarding the mode of Romania's modernization that proved to be their most durable achievement. It set off a debate on the paths of development, and on the way the Romanians conceived of their identity, that would last until World War II.⁴⁵ Central to it was the rejection of uncritical aping of and borrowings from European practice in total disregard of existing traditions and cultural patterns. Such inorganic transplantations, in their view, not only failed to take root in Romanian life and did not improve the socioeconomic condition of the country: they were inherently alien to Romania's specific conditions and, as such, engendered superficiality, mediocrity and harm, not benefit. As Titu Maiorescu put it in his programmatic essay "Against the Current Trend in Romanian Culture" (1868),

Seemingly, in terms of foreign forms, Romanians today possess almost the entire Occidental civilization. We have politics and science, we have journals and academies, we have schools and literature, we have museums, conservatory, we have theater, we even have a constitution. But in fact, these are all lifeless creations, pretensions without foundation, phantoms without body, illusions without truth [...] The form without substance not only does not carry any good, but it is downright corrupting...⁴⁶

⁴⁵ "The forms-without-substance formula became an essential expression of the critical Romanian thought of the post-1866 generation and developed parallel to all constitutional reforms and all forms of civilization of modern Romania: its impact was so strong that, after having been adopted as self-evident by the contemporaries, it was handed down to the new generations as inheritance, seeking to deny the great progress achieved and proclaiming it a deviation from the normal evolution" (Eugen Lovinescu, *T. Maiorescu*, 2nd ed. [Bucharest: Minerva, 1978], 210–211).

⁴⁶ Titu Maiorescu, "În contra direcției de astăzi în cultura română," in Titu Maiorescu, *Critice* (Editie îngrijită de Domnica Filimon) (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1998), 101–113. As the foregoing survey should have demonstrated, semantically and ideologically Maiorescu's formula was not original—its message is easily detected in previous conservative and liberal-conservative thought, at least from 1848 onwards. His formulation, however, was recognized as particularly eloquent and clear.

Before establishing universities and academies, he argued, a society has to have scholars and science; before opening museums and theaters, it has to have audiences; and before extending franchise and the press, it needs to have citizens and an enlightened public. "A people can live without culture in the hope that at a certain moment in its evolution it will get one," he continued, "but a people cannot live with a false culture" since it threatens it with destruction.

"Forms without substance" was the famous Junimist dictum and critical diagnosis. The two parts of the expression had sociological as well as cultural underpinnings. The "form" stood for "the external framework of the imported civilization": legislation, political system (including the constitution), educational establishments, and culture generally, which were hurriedly and uncritically copied from outside. The "substance" was taken to mean not only, or even primarily, the social and economic conditions, but also the spiritual culture, popular psychology, inherited customs and character traits.⁴⁷ The forms-without-substance thesis became a common reference in the critical discourses of the era. By highlighting the sharp discrepancy between the new institutions and laws, introduced en masse in accelerated time, and the fabric and norms of the society, the theory gave expression to the actual state of affairs, to a self-evident "social morphology."⁴⁸

Significantly, unconditional Westernizers found it hard to reject the Junimist charges. In 1876 the Romanian prime minister and former campaigner for a revolution *à la française*, Ion C. Brătianu (1821–1891), admitted that during and after 1848, the Romanians, lacking the time to replicate "the modes of production of a civilized society," had "draped" themselves in modern political "clothes" by copying the Western "pattern of political organization" and legal codes. The state that had thus emerged acquired a "wonderful roof" but lacked sound foundations. The subsequent constitutional and legal modernization largely failed in propelling agriculture, industry and commerce, and instead produced an army of civil servants fully dependent on their ability to tap into the state revenues from the

⁴⁷ Zigu Ornea, *Junimea și Junimismul* (Bucharest: Editura Eminescu, 1975), 163–166; Ion Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne. Partidul Conservator* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1987), 469.

⁴⁸ For a discussion of the Romanian (Junimist) critique of liberal modernization in comparison with the Serbian (populist Radicals), see Diana Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata. Modernost-legitimnost v Sărbija i Rumăniya prez XIX vek* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2001), 192–219.

only productive source—the peasants' labor.⁴⁹ However, for the leader of the Romanian liberals, this admission served only to boost the role of the state as the driving force of modernization, hence bureaucracy's weight and interventionism, during the long liberal administration.

The "form-substance" debates typically concerned the suitability and functioning of the modern political and legal structures and of the state apparatus—the constitution, laws, bureaucracy, parliamentary system and parties (but rarely the army, which was supposed to play a key role in the solving of irredentist "national questions"). The sudden introduction of an "unheard-of system of Western norms" in Greece after 1830 has often been seen as having engendered "tensions and contradictions between two incompatible 'basic societal models,' " whose long-term consequences turned into "inescapable social and political issues."⁵⁰ In the political sphere, the Greek constitution of 1844, which was meant to curb unlimited royal powers and provided for practically universal manhood suffrage, failed to enforce the principles of constitutional government. It proved incapable of thwarting the manipulations, patronage and fraud with which King Otho ensured the alternation in government, at his authoritarian will, of the political parties conspicuously dubbed "French," "English" and "Russian." The widely documented arbitrariness and corruption of the "Othonian regime," similarly to that associated with the "personal regime" of the Bulgarian king Ferdinand half a century later, seems to have been bolstered, rather than restrained, by the representative institutions and the mechanisms of constitutional government. For nearly five decades after the promulgation of the 1864 Greek constitution, which instituted a "crowned democracy" with universal male suffrage and a single-chamber parliament, politics continued to be dominated by the court and political patrons, while authoritarian and reciprocal forms of distribution of power and "spoils" continued to prevail in the political arena. Indeed it has been argued that the very introduction of a centralized liberal state, under circumstances of a "clan-centered organization of value distribution," "resulted in the emasculation of the precocious liberal societal project."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ion C. Brătianu, *Discursuri, scrisori, acte și documente* (Bucharest: Impremiriile Independența, 1912), vol. 2, part 2, 107–111.

⁵⁰ Constantine Tsoukalas, "'Enlightened' Concepts in the 'Dark': Power and Freedom, Politics and Society," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 9, no. 1 (1991), 1–2.

⁵¹ Tsoukalas, "'Enlightened' Concepts in the 'Dark,'" 15–17.

The Bulgarian constitution (1879), acknowledged as being especially liberal and even “democratic” (in its provisions for a unicameral legislature elected with universal manhood suffrage and wide civil rights and freedoms), was repeatedly criticized as unsuitable for the state of the Bulgarian post-Ottoman society. The main dispute in the Constituent Assembly revolved around the establishment of an upper chamber (Senate), proposed by the “Conservatives” (as the moderate or conservative liberals were dubbed) in order to curb the fervor (and inexperience) of the peasant majority in the lower chamber and ensure “mature deliberation” of the laws. It was rejected by the Assembly, dominated by the radical Liberals (populists), who insisted that the nation’s political and civic education could only come about through the exercise of self-government, that the Bulgarians needed no “intermediaries” or “supervision” in the process, and that “progress will be born out of freedom.”⁵² In the following decades the Bulgarian constitutional debate was periodically renewed. This debate was fueled by the weaknesses in the functioning of the political system, which some ascribed to the Bulgarian constitution’s democratic “excesses” and others attributed to its democratic “deficit.”⁵³ There were also those who stressed the mismatch and contradiction between the “collectivistic,” “patriarchal” proclivities of the Bulgarian society at the time and the idea of citizenship underlying the constitution and presupposing affinity to individualism and enterprise cultivated by appropriate economic conditions:

Among our public and among those who represented it in the Constituent Assembly, there was no developed individual self-awareness that would identify with the constitution with a deep internal conviction. This is quite clear. Spiritual individualism, which alone could make the constitution a real fact of our life, did not have a place in the economic life we were undergoing at the time. . . . It is quite clear that a civic spirit cannot develop in patriarchal conditions.⁵⁴

The divergence between the spirit of the constitution on the one hand and the “patriarchal” conditions and political culture on the other was defined by a professional Bulgarian jurist in the following terms: “The

⁵² Cyril Black, *The Establishment of Constitutional Government in Bulgaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943).

⁵³ For more details, see Roumen Daskalov, *Bălgarskoto obshtestvo 1878–1939*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2005), 27–34.

⁵⁴ Ivan Harizanov, “Prinos kăm harakteristikata na nashite partii,” *Demokraticheski pregled* 4, no. 3 (1906), 271–272.

constitution granted to us has rarely found real implementation but has most often served as a shield behind which there hides and disguises itself either absolutism or demagoguery, or the tyranny of ignorant masses or brutal force." (The hope was nonetheless expressed that the Bulgarians would learn step by step to maneuver in the "delicate dress, either too broad or too tight, which is called the Bulgarian constitution.")⁵⁵ This situation created a political vacuum between the state and the mass of (otherwise enfranchised) peasantry—a fact that was not lost on foreign visitors. Writing about Bulgaria a decade and a half after the adoption of its "ultra-liberal" constitution, E. Dicey observed: "Except in the large towns, very little interest is taken in politics. To the great mass of the electorate, it is a matter of utter indifference who their representatives might be. . . . and in the majority of instances the representatives [in Parliament] are virtually nominated by the government of the day."⁵⁶

Predictably, the diagnosis of the practices of liberal constitutionalism and democracy from distinctly conservative positions was especially critical. The bitter "meta-political" reflections of Stoyan Mihaylovski (1856–1927) are particularly interesting because they were couched precisely in terms of the "form versus substance" thesis, closely replicating the core arguments and the vocabulary of the Romanian Junimist critics. A constitution and laws in general, along with the institutions and the order they had introduced, Mihaylovski maintained, remained "on paper," "in writing" only, if they did not become anchored in the "hearts" and the "souls," in "the collective psyche" or "public consciousness," "mentality" and "spirit," "beliefs" and "aspirations" of the people. The institutions should be harmonized with (and tailored to) the collective psyche; they should "reflect" the surrounding world and the "racial peculiarities" of the people for whom they were established. In the same way, a "democratic rule" and "rule of law" (*Rechtsstaat*) are doomed to remain empty notions in the absence of corresponding mores and enlightened public opinion, of people educated in a civic spirit. Changes in laws and institutions should be preceded by changes in the "internal life" (such as the "hearts," "souls" and "collective psyche"). Progress, and political progress in particular, is a slow and difficult process of learning and apprenticeship—of gradual evolution and transformation "from democratization of the spirit to

⁵⁵ D. Vogazli, "Prestäpleniya po izborite i chastno v Bälğariya," *Yuridicheski pregled* 11, no. 1 (1903), 26, 28.

⁵⁶ Edward Dicey, *The Peasant State: An Account of Bulgaria in 1894* (London: John Murray, 1894), 145.

democratization of the laws and institutions [*naredbi*],” “from new people to a new order.” Furthermore, political progress takes place “bottom up,” from an enlightened public spirit to a liberal legal public order. To proceed in the reverse order—from outside to the inside, from the top to the bottom—is to make artificial, groundless and ephemeral progress. It also leads to a distortion of the imported institutions, which in turn disfigure and spoil the spirit of the nation, on which they are imposed, and slow down its real progress.⁵⁷ Here was a classical “organic” view about change and progress: from the inside of the “content” to the outside of the “form,” from the social fabric up to the overarching institutional order. However, it remained mute on the question of how a (pre-modern) society could remain isolated from the raging torrents of modernity, or which institutions would suit the “primitive” collective psyche of the people while pulling it out of its primitivism.

The Romanian conservatives, including their most Westernized faction—the Junimists—were particularly critical of the Romanian constitution of 1866, closely modeled on the Belgian example. They regarded it as utterly unsuitable for contemporary Romanian society (as they also judged the Romanian adoption of the “representative” and “democratic” system in general). Said Petre Carp, the political leader of the Junimists, in a speech before the Constituent Assembly of 1879 convened to amend the 1866 constitution:

When Romania, almost virgin in a cultural sense, suddenly saw itself confronted with Western civilization, it was only natural that she did not understand the whole mechanism and the entire course of this civilization. It was natural that many times she confused the cause with the consequence and assumed that by imitating in a superficial way the consequences, by simply borrowing the forms of Western civilization, we would attain the same result as that achieved by Europe.

However, Romanians tended to forget that

this can only be the outcome of a preliminary work that we have not accomplished and without which, despite all our servile imitation, we will never reach prosperity. And when we think that liberty can create civilization

⁵⁷ Stoyan Mihaylovski, “Kak zapadat i se provalyat dărzhavite,” in Stoyan Mihaylovski, *Neizdadeni săchineniya*, vol. 1 (Metapolitika). Sofia, 1940 (written in 1924), 77–209, esp. 106–113, 138–139, 146, 167–169, 174–182, 192–195, 206–208. Among Mihaylovski’s references were Montesquieu, Ernst Renan, August Comte, Hippolyte Taine and Leon Gambetta.

purely and simply, we bitterly deceive ourselves, because it is civilization that creates liberty, not liberty that creates civilization.⁵⁸

If, for the Bulgarian critics of liberal constitutionalism, what mattered most was the moral "immaturity" of their "young" nation—the absence of a developed civic culture and "spiritual individualism"—for the Romanian Junimist critics it was primarily the absence of a social foundation for the constitutional state. As Titu Maiorescu put it in Parliament in 1876:

In our country, however, gentlemen, constitutional reforms were copied and introduced in public life without asking, without taking into account whether a real *tiers état* [third estate] exists in our country that would feel the need for such a reform and would deservedly gain preponderance in the state . . . We still do not have precisely this class of wealthy and enlightened businessmen, independent industrialists and factory owners whose prevalence would be felt in society and whose wealth, prudently acquired, would guarantee the much-needed stability of any state.⁵⁹

Following their secession from the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan states embarked on a large-scale adoption of codified modern legislation intended to sanction new social and economic practices. Legal transfer began essentially as a political project—a *deus ex machina* that would rescue the Balkan states from their Oriental legacy, backwardness and peculiarities.⁶⁰ "The law of other countries," noted a Bulgarian lawyer in 1900, "lay before us prepared and in good order, so that we had only to make use of it."⁶¹ Modern law, however, came in conflict with the customary law that had prevailed until then, creating great divergences between legal and social practice and even moral norms, which seriously undermined its effectiveness and authority. There was a similar effect from the inconsistent nature of laws—all too often eclectically and hastily put together from "the best available European laws" and afterwards

⁵⁸ Petre P. Carp, *Discursuri 1866–1888*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Soccec, 1907), 201–202.

⁵⁹ Titu Maiorescu, *Discursuri parlamentare*, vol. 1 (Bucharest: Soccec, 1897), 415.

⁶⁰ "Legal transfers are frequently—perhaps predominantly—geared to fitting an imagined *future*. Most legal transfers are imposed, invited or otherwise adopted because the society, or at least some groups or elites within that society, seek to use law for the purposes of *change*. The goal is not to fit law to what exists but to reshape what exists through the introduction of something *different*": David Nelken, "Comparatists and Transferability," in *Comparative Legal Studies: Traditions and Transitions*, eds. Pierre Legrand and Roderick Munday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 457.

⁶¹ Cited in Jani Kirov, "Foreign Law Between 'Grand Hazard' and Great Irritation: The Bulgarian Experience After 1878," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 10, no. 2 (2009), 714.

subjected to numerous changes, corrections and amendments. Most of the peasant population, commentators grumbled, came to regard law as “formalistic,” expensive and socially unjust, and lawyers as social oppressors or parasites. Compromised by irregularities of application and abuses, such as bribery, partisanship and political protection, the judiciary was considered to be one of the weakest segments in the state machinery.⁶² Indeed, the overproduction of lawyers was seen as directly causing the proliferation of “empty forms” and as indicating the society’s inability to introduce a capitalist modernity. The imposition of an impersonal and non-discriminating rule of law was taking place only gradually and only in certain spheres.

No less common were the grievances against the bloated and cumbersome civil service, administrative inefficiency and corruption, and the ruthless centralization suppressing local self-government.⁶³ Especially strident were the protests against the bureaucracy in Serbia during the regime of the “Defenders of the Constitution” (*Ustavobraniteli*) in the 1840s and 1850s, not because the bureaucracy was most inflated there, but because of its intense clash with the norms of a patriarchal peasant society and the emergence of radical critics acting as crusaders on their behalf.⁶⁴ Outside observers also used to single out the excessive bureaucracy and the redistribution of offices with each new government as a basic weakness of the newly created Balkan states, which looked even less justified in overwhelmingly peasant societies.⁶⁵ In a situation of small and underdeveloped economies, the paucity of job opportunities outside public service and the effects of the state-led modernization combined to create what a socialist critic of the Romanian sociopolitical system called “the proletariat of the pen”—a large army of under- and unemployed intelligentsia and professional job-hunters whose venality and low morale turned them into an emblem of “defective modernization.” In Bul-

⁶² For Bulgarian examples, see Kirov, *Foreign Law*, 712–717; Daskalov, *Bălgarskoto obshtestvo*, vol. 1, 79–82, 88–94.

⁶³ For Bulgarian examples, see Daskalov, *Bălgarskoto obshtestvo*, vol. 1, 59–78.

⁶⁴ For example Svetozar Marković, *Srbija na Istoku i drugi otbrani spisi* (Skopje: Drzhavno Knigoizdatelstvo na Makedonija, 1946; first edition in 1872), 63–72. On the Serbian Radicals’ vehemently anti-bureaucratic stance and manipulation of peasants’ grievances, see Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 161–173.

⁶⁵ Emile de Laveleye, *Balkanskiy poluostrov. Chast vtoraya* (part 2) (Moscow, 1889), 112–114, 130–131; Konstantin Jireček, *Knjazhestvo Bălgariya. Chast I. Bălgarska dărzhava* (Plovdiv: Hr. G. Danov, 1899), 345.

garia this "educated proletariat" or "proletariat of the mind," depending on their positions in the state apparatus, was judged as either demoralized or strongly subversive.⁶⁶ The politically involved intelligentsia in general was condemned for its bureaucratization, unscrupulousness, careerism and corruption.⁶⁷

The weaknesses in the functioning of the political system (parties, elections and parliamentary practices), such as arbitrary changes of the cabinet by the monarch (or the rotation of the "hungry" and the "sated"), rigged elections and electoral violence, appointments and dismissals of civil servants on the sole criterion of political loyalty (a system variously defined as *partisanstvo*, patronage or clientage), ineffective parliamentary control, corruption, and so on, became targets of ridicule and bitter criticism in all Balkan countries. They seriously eroded the credibility of the parliamentary mechanism itself. As pointed out by a critic of King Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's "personal regime" in Bulgaria in the early twentieth century, "In the Western states the government as a rule derives from the people, from parliament; here, in the East, the parliament derives from the government."⁶⁸ The message conveyed by this and many similar assessments was that the way the modern political systems in the Balkans functioned in a manner diametrically opposed to the ones in the "West."

It is highly significant that in most Balkan languages, a new political "concept" emerged to give expression to the disfigurement of normative political values, behavior and procedures—*politicianismul*, *partizanstvo* (or *politikanstvo*), *politennomai* (or *politenezhai*) "politicianism." None of these signified a rejection of politics, but rather its degeneration into "sub-political" power networks and games of redistribution of resources.

The political systems (especially the parties) in all Balkan states were typically accused of lacking principles and ideas, of lacking a real social basis and public causes around which political associations should have arisen and in the name of which political struggles should have been fought. Dimitrie Bolintineanu, a Romanian revolutionary of 1848 and promoter of the modernizing reforms of Prince Alexandru I. Cuza, declared,

⁶⁶ Ivan Ev. Geshov, "Chinovnishkiy proletariat," in Ivan Evstatiev Geshov, *Dumi i dela. Finansovi i ikonomicheski studii* (Sofia, 1899), 48–65.

⁶⁷ Krăstyu Krăstev, "Bălgarskata inteligentsiya," *Misāl* 8, no. 1 (1898), 3–13; Todor Vlaykov, "Vārhu lichniya rezhim u nas. Obshti belezhki," *Demokraticheski pregled* 8, no. 10 (1910), 1174–1187, esp. 1182–1184.

⁶⁸ Ivan Mihaylov, "Psihologiya na bălgarskite politicheski partii," *Bălgarska sbirka* 7, no. 2 (1900), 114–123, cited on 118.

"The struggle between the parties is not one of principles—the parties have no principles. They . . . fight for power in the same way as commercial firms fight for credit."⁶⁹ The widely held opinion, occasionally shared by the censured politicians themselves, was that the parties were the expression of differences not in principle, even less in social or class allegiance, but of personal interests for gain, between cliques and coteries bickering over power who drew support from, and met the expectations of, clients rather than voters.⁷⁰ The reason, once again, was found in the chasm between political forms and social realities. In a speech to Parliament, the political leader of the Romanian Junimists, Petre Carp, pinpointed the problem thus:

When we adopted a liberal constitution, we were faced with the following problem: we had a liberal constitution, but when we looked around for classes on which this liberal constitution could rest, we found nothing—we had to create such classes, and we created them. But . . . since the creation of such elements could not proceed fast enough with their own forces, this [task] had to be accomplished with the support of the state, and from this, we can say, ensue the defects of our constitutional situation today, as well as the abnormal fact that our parties are budgetary parties. I think there is no other state in Europe where the number of those who are living on the budget is as great as it is [in this country].⁷¹

Mihai Eminescu, the journalistic "dagger" of the critics from the right, depicted this "class of lawyers" (as Maiorescu called it) in the most repulsive and derisive terms: "a class of pompous parasites," "a class of unproductive consumers," "comedians and loafers, people whose work and intelligence are not worth a penny, defective people, intellectual and moral plebeians."⁷²

Somewhat less harshly but just as sneeringly, the Greek satirist Emmanouil Roidis described the Greek party political system (1875): "Elsewhere parties come into existence because people disagree with each other, each

⁶⁹ Dimitrie Bolintineanu, *Opere alese*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: ESPLA, 1955), 287.

⁷⁰ For assessments in this sense by representatives of the whole political spectrum, see Samson Madievskii, "O haraktere politicheskikh gruppirovok gosподstvuyushchikh klassov Rumynii 60-h gg. XIX v.—1918 g.," in *Problemy vnutri- i vneshnepoliticheskoi istorii Rumynii novogo i noveishego vremeni* (Kishinev: Shtiintsa, 1988), 13–35.

⁷¹ Constantin Gane, *P. P. Carp și locul său în istoria politică a țării*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura ziarului "Universul," 1936), 401–402 (speech to Parliament in March 1910). "There is not a single reform in this country," Carp added, "that did not have as a result, often the only one, the increase of the civil service" (403).

⁷² Cited in Ornea, *Junimea și Junimismul*, 195.

wanting different things. In Greece, the exact opposite occurs: what causes parties to come into existence and compete with each other is the admirable accord with which all want the same thing: to be fed at the public's expense."⁷³

From the 1880s the Greek press grew increasingly frustrated over the "malfunctioning" not of particular governments and politicians but of the political system as a whole. Greek deputies, it asserted, represented neither the nation nor their constituencies but a small number of political patrons; their infatuation with grand words and constitutional theories only served to mask the lack of common sense, sound ideas and a program.⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, the main deficiencies of the system—overblown and inefficient bureaucracy, personal clientelistic parties and widespread political patronage—and the consequent low level of trust in the state and its institutions were blamed on the inappropriateness of the liberal institutional forms, including constitutionalism. In search of a way out of the "caricature" which the Greek state presented, some went so far as to advocate the institution of a royal government and to remind Greeks of the ancient Roman practice of appointing a dictator in hard times.⁷⁵

Greece has conventionally been cited as a textbook example of traditional "clientelistic" politics, especially until 1910, when Elefterios Venizelos assumed office and in the following decades succeeded in weakening the influence of the local bosses somewhat and, in the longer term, reconfiguring the political system. Present-day critical analysts of modern Greek society have been split over the interpretation of the origins and persistence of Greek "political clientelism"—whether it should be explained in terms of a legacy of Ottoman domination, as a remnant of pre-modern social relations, or in terms of encroaching capitalism, as a "modern" condition provoked by "the influx of a capitalist mode of social relations in an adamantly pre-capitalist context."⁷⁶ Common to both views, however,

⁷³ Cited in Richard Clogg, *Parties and Elections in Greece: The Search for Legitimacy* (London: Hurst, 1987), 3–4.

⁷⁴ Basil Gounaris, "Model Nation and Caricature State: Competing Greek Perspectives on the Balkans and Hellas (1797–1896)," in *The Making of Modern Greece*, eds. Roderick Beaton and David Ricks (London and New York: Ashgate, 2009), 143–145.

⁷⁵ Interestingly, the critical Greek press used to teach the Greek public a humiliating lesson by contrasting the poor performance of Greek politics to that of the other Balkan states at the time (Gounaris, *Model Nation and Caricature State*).

⁷⁶ The clientelistic model of Greek politics as a historical legacy has been promoted in particular by Nicos Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialization in the Balkan States and Latin America* (Houndmills, Basingstoke,

is the perceived cultural and institutional dichotomy between traditional ("Byzantine-Ottoman," "pre-modern," "pre-capitalist") substance and imported ("Western," "liberal," "capitalist") forms. Even those skeptical of modern Greece's "cultural dualism" and the Byzantine-Ottoman roots of its political culture stress the "dissimilar signification of law" and the existence of such attitudes to the state, to order, to common interest and development that find expression in "paralegal formations," unlawful activities carried out in a formally legal way (with the correct "papers") and a "con game" of the citizens (officials included) to outsmart a deeply distrusted state.⁷⁷ The state and formal law in Greece thus seem to acquire a shadowy existence, subject to radical societal reinterpretation and collective manipulation.

In Bulgaria too the parties of the pre-World War I era were denounced for their lack of genuine principles and ideas, for being cynically pragmatic and in pursuit solely of the spoils of office, for being "job-hunter parties," "coteries" or, in the definition of one author, "joint-stock firms for profits from a political enterprise" and "partnerships for the exploitation of power."⁷⁸ Since post-independence Bulgarian society was socially more uniform than that of Romania or even of Greece, consisting of an overwhelming majority of independent smallholders, distinct social interests

Hampshire, UK: Macmillan, 1986), 3–7, 29–50. See also Keith R. Legg, *Politics in Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1969); Constantine Tsoucalas, "On the Problem of Political Clientelism in Greece in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 5, no. 2 (1978), 5–17; Christos Lyrantzis, "Politike kai pelateiako systema sten Hellada tou 19ou aiona," in *Epeteris tou Kentrou Erevnon tes Hellenikes Koinonias* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1987), 157–182. For a more recent critique, see Stathis Gourgouris, *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 64–70.

⁷⁷ Gourgouris, *Dream Nation*, 163–174. While Gourgouris questions the unitary (European) model of development-modernization and of capitalist modernity from a post-colonial perspective and points to the very different long-term tradition of the societies under Byzantine and Ottoman regimes—namely, polymorphous populations, the persistence of semi-autonomous local administration and a different concept of law—this actually confirms in a still more radical manner the "form-substance" problem. Remarkably, present-day analysts of Greek "Europeanization" in the framework of the EU continue to point out that "the main features of the Greek institutional setting remain statism and clientelism, major barriers to the modernisation process": Kevin Featherstone, "Introduction: 'Modernisation' and the Structural Constraints of Greek Politics," *West European Politics* 28, no. 2 (2005), 236.

⁷⁸ Boncho Boev, "Vătreshen pregled," *Spisanie na Bălgarskoto ikonomichesko druzhestvo* 4, no. 10 (1900), 717–718; Dimo Kazasov, *Ulitsi, hora, săbitiya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1968), 179–180; Todor Vlaykov, "Belezhki vărhu parlamentarizma u nas," *Demokraticheski pregled* 3, no. 3–4 (1905), 53–61, esp. 58. See also the sharp observations of the Russian constitutional lawyer Pavel Milyukov, *Bălgarskata konstitutsiya* (Solun, 1905), 113, 122–123.

could serve even less than elsewhere in the region to justify the existence of so many political parties (as was recognized at the time).⁷⁹

The often-praised "golden age" of democracy in Serbia under Nikola Pašić's Radical Party since the 1890s has come in for scrutiny by some present-day scholars. They have found it instead to be the opposite of a pluralistic competitive political system—a monopolistic and almost absolute ("totalistic") rule of a populist party, based on the conservative instincts of the peasant masses and treating its opponents as enemies. Its ideal of a "people's state," based on patriarchal (egalitarian, collectivist and authoritarian) concepts of political authority, was the antithesis of a modern state, with its specialized institutions, formal law and bureaucracy.⁸⁰ "Our public life is not so deep as to be able to assimilate a great culture which is entirely individualistic at its base," reads the conclusion of a contemporary observer. But, by making use of Western phraseology, "our shallow political intelligentsia" hampered, consciously or unconsciously, the realization "that we are not a democratic people in the Western sense of the word" and that "between ours and Western democracy there exists an essential difference."⁸¹

"The patriarchal milieu had to go through and digest in a short time everything that in the West had been taking shape in the course of centuries," the Serbian intellectual Dušan Nikolajević maintained in 1910. "It failed to do so. All this brought us to a situation whereby today we, despite all bombastic statements, are not a European state in substance, but only in exterior."⁸² "Democracy, parliamentarism, civil rights, progress, culture and the other concepts that constitute the basis of the political

⁷⁹ Ivan Manolov, "Vätreshen pregled," *Spisanie na Bălgarskoto ikonomicheskoto druzhestvo* 5, nos. 6–7 (1901), 431–442, esp. 439–440; St. Mavrodiev, "Politicheskite partii i koalitsiite," *Demokraticheski pregled* 5, no. 10 (1907), 1005–1018, esp. 1014–1018.

⁸⁰ Perović, *Serbiya v modernizatsionnykh protsessakh*, 28–40; Andrei Shemyakin, "Politicheskie partii v nezavisimoi Serbii, 1881–1914," in *Chelovek na Balkanakh. Gosudarstvo i ego instituty: grimasy politicheskoi modernizatsii (poslednyaya chetvert' XIX—nachalo XX veka)*, ed. R.P. Grishina (St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2006), 199–214; Andrei Shemyakin, "Traditsionnoe obshtestvo i vyzovy modernizatsii. Serbiya poslednei treti XIX—nachala XX veka glazami russkikh," in *Chelovek na Balkanakh i protsessy modernizatsii*, 10–53, esp. 32–36; Shemyakin, *Serbskoe obshtestvo na rubezhe*, 31–49; Olga Popović-Obradović, *Parlamentarizam u Srbiji od 1903. do 1914. godine* (Belgrade: Logistika, 1998); Dubravka Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija 1903–1914. Istorijaska studija o "zlatnom dobu srpske demokratije"* (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2003).

⁸¹ Dušan Nikolajević, "Naš demokratizam," *Nedeljni pregled* (Belgrade, 1910), 5 (cited in Latinka Perović, *Između anarhije i autokratije. Srpsko društvo na prelazima vekova (XIX–XXI)* (Belgrade: Zagorac, 2006), 44.

⁸² Cited in Shemyakin, "Politicheskie partii," 213.

vocabulary of present-day Balkan inhabitants," added another Serbian observer, Kosta Stojanović, in the late 1890s, "are only words and phrases, which are in no way rooted in their worldview, but, since they are 'generally accepted,' they are called upon to conceal the rigid subconscious stereotypes which solely motivate all their actions and deeds."⁸³

The substance of most critiques, therefore, was emphatically prescriptive. The imported institutions grafted onto the Balkan trunk functioned very differently from the Western prototypes—not only poorly, but contrary to their very meaning or "spirit," that is, to the ideas and purposes invested in them, in the "West." Thus constitutional monarchy tended towards an arbitrary "personal regime"; elections were falsified and the idea of popular representation was compromised; cabinets were formed by acting governments rather than parliaments; the latter had little effective control over the executive; bureaucracies were cumbersome, inefficient and corrupt, and civil servants were at the discretion of each new government; the "rule of law" was a travesty, and personal and civil rights were trampled upon; the parties did not tolerate rivals and conducted a blatantly opportunistic struggle for power, offices, and spoils; and the educated strata (the intelligentsia) were heavily engaged in job-hunting and unprincipled political struggles in the absence of other professional opportunities. "Democracy," "law," "rights" and the like, although part of the political vocabulary of the day, concealed widely divergent, often opposite realities.

Clearly both positive and negative assessments of the imported Western concepts, as well as various "mixed" opinions, were voiced from contending political-ideological positions. They were closely connected to each other through a process of mutual contestation and mirroring of opponents' arguments, which explains the proper dynamics and relative autonomy of the debate. Allowing for demagoguery and self-interest in praising or denouncing the Western "forms," however, the debate was fueled by real problems. The massive wave of "forms without substance" criticism seems to indicate that, soon after the foreign forms were implemented, few saw much benefit in the way they were adapted to and assimilated by the local realities. Far more focused on the deficits and distortions of the grafted forms. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the works of the most representative and best-known Balkan writers of the time were pervaded by nostalgia for the past, the idealization of peasant life, or sarcastic

⁸³ Cited in Shemyakin, "Serbskoe obshtestvo," 43.

or gloomy representations of the distorted present. The idealization of the people's authenticity and patriarchal past, in contrast to the disfigured and deeply disharmonious present, was not a consequence of the peasant character of the Balkan societies alone. It was "the reaction of many to the abundance of the new—above all in the sphere of politics—forcing its way practically everywhere, which was combined with their reluctance to accept it as a panacea (as political freedom had often been presented) and skepticism towards novelties (whose practical value was still unproven)."⁸⁴

The imported novelties not only clashed with the local economic realities, customs and mentalities; they often led, partly through the mechanisms already described, to an exacerbated sense of misery. While the liberal, humanistic and "brotherly" ideas of equality, popular sovereignty and civil rights were triumphantly flaunted at the top, to those afflicted adversely by the changes they appeared to be ruining the traditional social and moral foundations and creating social contradictions, vented in despair or revolt. These ideas remained the achievement, but also the demagogical playground, of a small minority of "newly minted democrats" and parvenus, beyond the reach of those for whom they were supposedly intended and whose labor made possible the continuous "import" of foreign "democracy" and "capitalism." In fact, imported democracy and capitalism were compromised without having been tried in earnest; their shortcomings were caused more by their underdevelopment than by their full development. If unconditional Westernization held any benefits for the society, these were not in the present but promises for the future. In their own time the nineteenth-century Westernizers could point to little that they had contributed to the general welfare or the better rule of the Balkan societies. What appeared conspicuous instead was the ominous moral confusion, the catastrophic effect of the modernizing zeal upon the peasant mass, the "national convulsions, a natural reaction of the coerced, tortured mentality."⁸⁵

One can note that, as with the "fashions," an object of criticism was not the "West" and its "models," but the mode of their reception, adaptation

⁸⁴ Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne*, 482.

⁸⁵ Aurel Popovici, *Naționalism sau democrație. O critică a civilizațiunii moderne* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1910), 85 (cf. Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne*, 482–485). For more on the context that engendered and sustained the widespread critical attitudes among the Romanian intelligentsia at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, see Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na sbobodata*, 192–195.

and functioning in the local societies. However, while in the earlier, post-Enlightenment and national-romantic period such criticism was typically directed against the (“backward,” “lethargic,” “unenlightened”) society in an exertion to “awaken” it to the need of reform, after the wholesale Westernization was launched, the criticism was targeted primarily at the elites, who had presided over the transference of models and then misused them to the detriment of society. The attitude towards “Europe” itself, despite significant apprehensions as regards its political weaponry and economic power, was dominated by admiration mixed with a sort of runner-up attitude characteristic of “self-denigrating” cultures.

The question then can be asked: given the discrepancy asserted between “forms” and “substance,” what course was recommended? The “modernizers,” led by the radical liberals in the individual countries, were optimistic: the new forms, although “empty” at the beginning, would be filled in with substance in the course of their steadfast implementation. Through the modernizers’ perseverance, the written constitution would become effective and sustain an “unwritten constitution” of good and sound practices; parliamentary rule would grow into an effective check on the executive and a guarantee for the protection of rights; the enforcement of written law would lead to the rule of law; and the parties and party life would mature into ideals and principles.⁸⁶ Modern-minded (and Western-looking) conservatives like the Junimists, on the other hand, advocated an “organic” evolution of the national institutions: while supporting cultural and institutional modernization, they were convinced that it should be organically attuned to the specific social and cultural context. Modern institutions, therefore, should develop gradually through experience and not be the product of “abstract” ideologies, universalist theories and rushed experiments. For all their criticism, nonetheless, the conservatives did not demand the elimination of the Western “forms” already introduced but insisted on the need for their true assimilation and “substantiation” through patient, conscientious work. At the same time, however, they furnished the intellectual matrix from which other, far more radical alternative solutions would develop after the Great War.

The most radical rejection of things European from the right came from the Romanian conservative “dissidents,” who parted ways with the liberal-conservatism of the Junimists at the beginning of the twentieth century.

⁸⁶ Milyukov, *Bălgarskata konstitutsiya*, 115–116. See also Vogazli, “Prestăpleniya po izborite,” 28. A similar view on the forms becoming substance in Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane, 1900–1937* (Bucharest: Editura pentru literatură, 1937), 18–21, 29–32, 51–54. About Lovinescu, see Hitchins, *Rumania*, 292–294.

It had been gradually taking shape since the 1880s through the impassioned writings of political journalist and poet Mihai Eminescu, a cult figure for the interwar Romanian autochthonists. It gathered momentum during the first decade of the twentieth century, when it was taken up by major public figures such as the historian Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940) and the Transylvanian politician Aurel C. Popovici (1863–1917). While accepting the orthodox conservative slogan of forms without substance, they considered it to be a symptom rather than the actual cause for the deep disruption of Romanian society. In the search for the “real ailments” of Romanian modernity, their discourse grew increasingly ethno-populist, xenophobic and anti-Western.

The rejection by the Left was paradigmatically epitomized by the Serbian populist-radical movement, which owed much to the ideas of the early socialist Svetozar Marković. Yet even if they made much of the anti-capitalist rhetoric, in actuality the Serbian Radicals proceeded by filling in the borrowed Western forms with “local” (patriarchal, collectivist) contents and meaning, thus literally “domesticating” the Western “imports,” rather than experimenting with radically populist institutional innovations.

In either direction, Balkan criticisms of the imitation of “the West” and foreign “imports” drew heavily on and resonated with ideas that had originated in the West itself, thus presenting an interesting case of intellectual interplay. The early critical local thought, demanding compliance with the cultural and sociological distinctiveness of the local milieu, crystallized in interaction with a broad ideological current in Western Europe with origins in the reactions against the French Revolution and its consequences. The political and social “forms” forcibly imposed by the revolution, its universalist disregard for local traditions and historical evolution, the incongruity between purely rational political models and the peculiar forms of life of each people—these were the common themes of the post-revolutionary, and not only conservative, reaction in many parts of Europe, including France (notably by de Bonald and de Maistre). The Balkan leftist critique appeared later and was entwined with the Russian-populist (*narodnik*) re-interpretation of Western Marxism. Thus, the opposition to the “import of Western models” was itself essentially an adaptation of a Western import: the advocates of “organic” development were as much a mouthpiece of European culture as were those who championed unconditional Europeanization.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ A leading theoretician of Romanian liberalism, Eugen Lovinescu, asserted that the Junimist criticism “is not a form of national traditionalism: just as liberalism was a replica

The Junimists, most of whom had studied in Germany, were influenced mainly by German Romantic philosophy and the social thought connected with it, especially historicist and organicist theories. Most prominent was the impact of the German historical school of law, which demanded respect for native traditions in law and constitutional order and praised evolutionary change as the norm of healthy societies, rejecting revolutions. To these were added the evolutionary ideas of Herbert Spencer and those informing Henry Buckle's *History of Civilization in England*. As Junimist ideologist Titu Maiorescu put it: "The historical propositions dominating among us are evolutionary in the English sense rather than revolutionary in the French sense."⁸⁸ The core thesis about the "forms without substance" itself owed a great deal to oppositions such as (Ferdinand Tönnies's) *Gemeinschaft* (community) vs. *Gesellschaft* (society), and culture vs. civilization, which dominated German sociology at the time. The former counterposed traditional (pre-modern) organic conditions to modern rational society; the latter contrasted the German (supposedly profound and spiritual) "culture" with the French (purportedly superficial and materialistic) "civilization." The Serbian Radicals, on the other hand, many of whom had also studied in Western, mainly Swiss and French universities, occasionally adopted the anti-Western stance of the Russian Slavophiles and posed as belonging to "the East." But their actual ideology and politics drew inspiration from other sources: from contemporary Western critical social thought, particularly Marxism, asserting the inevitability of capitalist development, and from the socialism of the Russian *narodniki* seeking an adjustment of Marx's theory to a non-industrialized rural society by skipping the capitalist phase of Western development.

Generally it can be argued that all three of the most influential politico-ideological currents in the Balkans during the nineteenth century—the radical-revolutionary, the reformist-evolutionary (or liberal-conservative) and the conservative—were the product of such entanglements. They all originated with the tradition of the French Enlightenment and the disparate intellectual currents that it had spawned since the end of the

of the French Revolution, so Junimism represents a replica of German and English evolutionism. Its character is just as ideological and rational as that of the 1848 liberal movement with which it is at war" (Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, ed. Zigu Ornea (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1972; first published 1924–1925), 295; Lovinescu, *T. Maiorescu*, 206–207).

⁸⁸ Titu Maiorescu, *Istoria politică a României sub domnia lui Carol I.* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1994; first published as *Istoria contemporană a României (1866–1900)* [Bucharest, 1925]), 33.

eighteenth century.⁸⁹ In this sense one should speak not of *the* "Western" or "European" model but of a number of heterogeneous European models that were being reworked and tested locally. If until 1848 the paragon of revolutionary France was the most infectious, after the "counter-revolution," and especially after the non-liberal German unification, the trend was instead a growing distrust of unconditional copying and a search for one's own, "organic" paths and evolutionary models. In various ways in the different Balkan countries, this tendency coalesced with the rise of the theories of "socialism in backward societies." As a result, it buttressed not the idea of a new social revolution but a kind of "rural utopia." These divergent tendencies did not occur in a neat succession, nor did they follow a uniform pattern across the Balkans. The "revolutionary paradigm," in its national-liberal garb, imposed itself, with some delay, upon the Serbs and the Bulgarians and, since its prestige was enhanced by the struggles against the Sublime Porte, was stronger and lasted longer in those two countries and in Greece. By the 1890s, however, the pendulum everywhere in the post-Ottoman Balkans had swung toward less socially radical and more "nationally protective" political designs.

Finally, one can speak of a certain "entanglement" between nineteenth-century debates about the disparity between form and substance and a cluster of present-day views on development and nationalism. Such ideas were first advanced precisely by authors who have worked on Eastern Europe in a broad historical perspective. Ivan Berend, for example, sees the development of East Central Europe, especially of Southeastern Europe, as marked by a number of deviations and diversions from the Western course of development, and by corresponding deficiencies, absences or inconsistencies. These include insufficient economic modernization, under-industrialization and retarded urbanization, as well as the preservation of "feudalism" and the nobility, hence the emergence of a "dual" society (traditional and modern, nobility and bourgeoisie) in Central Europe or "incomplete" societies (that is, largely peasant, without traditional elite or modern bourgeoisie) in the Balkans.⁹⁰ The aforementioned Andrew Janos speaks of a "reversed series of development" in Eastern Europe compared to the West: expansion of the state before the growth of the economy, striving for modern industry before the creation

⁸⁹ Marino, "Din istoria teoriei 'formă fără fond,'" 186.

⁹⁰ Ivan Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2003), 18–26, 196–207.

of modern agriculture, foreign-generated expectations outstripping locally generated incomes, and bureaucracy and intelligentsia outdoing market-oriented classes (with the result of subverting the market and an influx of talented people into politics rather than private enterprise).⁹¹ The criticism once couched in the conservative-evolutionary language of organic growth has thus set the frame for a teleological grand narrative of development enfolding in circumscribed phases and orderly succession. The notion of a similar reversal of the “normal” sequence has also become a hallmark of nationalism studies in the Balkans (and Eastern Europe generally). The advent of Balkan nationalism—national movements and the emergence of national consciousness, the building of nation-states, the pursuit of irredentist projects and territorial aggrandizement—has been conventionally seen as preceding, and not the result of, the advent of Balkan modernity (as the normative “Western original” postulates it should have been), and both nationalism and modernity in this part of Europe are considered to have suffered major distortions and dysfunctions as a result.⁹² Again, the observations and conclusions of scholars in this particular area of Balkan/Eastern European studies and those of the one-time protagonists of “home-grown” modernity are remarkably similar.

Obviously, the shared meanings and hierarchies across such historically disparate interpretations hinge on a common premise: a forcefully prescriptive, standardized and monolithic vision of the “West,” of *the* “Western” culture, values and social realities. The critical attitude to one’s own performance would have been inconceivable outside such a normativist vision, which was ubiquitous in both Western representations and (national and regional) self-representations of the Balkan world. The “West” in this vision holds the standard for “individualism,” “rationality” and “harmonious (or genuine) development,” with respect to which the Balkan societies’ performance appeared to be plagued by “absences,” “disfigurements,” “irrationalities” and ultimately “failure.” In a fundamental sense this was the logical—some might say necessary—corollary of the Western European pre-eminence in both ideology and power. It also explains the inherent linkage between the Balkan states’ efforts to purge themselves as fast and radically as possible from the vestiges of their

⁹¹ Janos, *The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary*, 313–314, 322; Janos, *Modernization and Decay*, 74, 113–114.

⁹² The nationalism-studies literature in this vein is immense. For a succinct critique, see Maria Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism,” *Slavic Review* 64, no. 1 (2005), 140–164.

Ottoman past and their readiness to assume the "canon" of European identity, which was set in contrast with Islam and the Orient. Both the thrust towards sweeping Europeanization and the frustration that it did not, and perhaps could not, succeed in the envisioned way ultimately hinged on the acute awareness of this asymmetrical relationship that turned into a standard premise.

But this is only half of the picture. For the critical judgments discussed above were, at the same time, a widely shared reaction *against* the normative pressure of the "West" and "European modernity," expressed from various ideological positions and, as we shall see, with various notions about how "true modernization" should look. The stimuli for this reaction evolved over time: from concerns primarily for the cultural identity of the national community in the initial period, through apprehensions over the ability of small young states to survive amid ruthless geopolitical and economic international competition, to disenchantment with the discrepancy between expectations and achievements in the process of Europeanization towards the end of the nineteenth century. The arguments against imported modernization on behalf of the social and cultural integrity of the community—a tendency that, to reiterate, partook in a long European tradition of cultural criticism directed at the effects of the Industrial Revolution, political democratization, and the emergence of mass society—crystallized over time into a consistent counter-reaction, which re-valORIZED the autochthonous values and spirituality and sought distinct paths to the future.

PATHS OF DEVELOPMENT

Critical reflections on foreign borrowing and its interaction with the local conditions naturally led to more general contemplations about the course of a country's proper development. The basic question was whether the "lagging" Balkan societies would (or should) follow the Western course of development or a different one, and if a different one, which one. Here we will trace the various answers given to this crucial question, which show a considerable variety and cannot be reduced to just a few positions. Not only did political and ideological pluralism translate into "path" pluralism, but also, as we shall see, the majority of positions were mixed or hybrid.

In the debates on development, all sides generally agreed on one overarching ideal: the creation of a viable national state, a competitive national economy and a respectable national culture. Some authors

separate, mostly on disciplinary grounds, what is known as the “modernization (or development) debates,” which engage primarily with sociology and political economy, from the debates on the “national identity,” which draw mainly on literary scholarship and other humanities. Such a division is untenable, however, primarily because the ideologies of modernization emerged precisely in response to, and remained most intimately intertwined with, the problems of identity caused by the encounter with (imported) modernity and the perceived differences between “us” and “them.” For that reason, it was often through and within debates over development/modernization—and the concomitant notions of “backwardness,” “progress,” “catching up,” “prosperity” and ultimately “power”—that all major contemporary formulations of collective identities and “national essences” were articulated, developmental options and social reforms were advocated or contested. As Katherine Verdery points out,

The people who argued about national identity did so in a multidisciplinary field of discourse that overlapped with talk on other themes: on the nature of the state, the situation of politics, the role of religion . . . , the class composition . . . , the history of its economic backwardness, and, above all, the proper course of development [that] should be followed—a path toward industrialization and parliamentary democracy, or something else.⁹³

In this sense, when we talk about identity, we talk about the different responses to the pressures of modernity and the different paths of development that were set forth. There is a remarkable correlation between developmental choices vis-à-vis “Europe”—with respect to Westernization, industrialism, capitalism and urbanization—and the definitions of national essence and its social anchoring. Thus, in all Balkan countries the imposing social prevalence of the village left a powerful imprint on the entire range of sociopolitical projects, just as it did on the various interpretations of the national “essence.” In most of them the peasantry came to epitomize the healthy national body and the unspoiled fount of national culture. The “national models” of development were thus focused predominantly on the village, while the town and the urban population were, more often than not, treated as alien transplants.

We will start with the debates on the paths of development proposed by the Liberals in Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria; the Conservatives (with an emphasis on the Romanian Junimists) and the powerful mass populist Radicalism in Serbia. Until the Balkan Wars and World War I, these were the three most influential “scenarios” proposed and the ones that

⁹³ Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 28–29.

were tested in actual government, so the incipient Balkan modernity was largely the product of their application and interaction. We will then consider the developmental visions of Marxist ("scientific") socialism and agrarianism, which bridged the prewar and the interwar eras. In all these cases we will confine ourselves to more general descriptions of the different currents, comparing their specifics, similarities and differences on the issue of development, while leaving their in-depth treatment for the subsequent essays in this volume. For reasons of space we will not deal here with authoritarian and fascist solutions, which are explored separately in this volume, but only with the major autochthonist identity discourses characteristic of the interwar period.

The liberal strategy of development is one of the few exceptions to the prevailing critical intellectual currents. Compared to other political-ideological positions, it was straightforward, pragmatic and policy-oriented, and its theoretical exposition was fleshed out only after World War I, especially in the writings of its Romanian champions: the literary critic Eugen Lovinescu (1881–1943) and the economist and sociologist Ștefan Zeletin (1882–1934). Lovinescu built his theory of modern Romanian civilization on the assumption that nations with a delayed entry into modernity (and capitalism) do not replicate the road of development of the more advanced nations but obey the "fatal social laws" of synchronism and dependence of the "backward" on the "advanced." The law of synchronism, or "catching-up" of the laggards with the pioneers, implies two processes: imitation and top-down enforcement of Western ideologies and institutions, that is, of non-autochthonous modern "forms." The history of modern Romanian civilization, from this point of view, began only at that moment when the "Western spirit" and innovations made their first inroads into Romanian society. Drawing on the sociology of Gabriel Tarde (*Les lois de l'imitation*, 1890), Lovinescu's principle of imitation was not just a natural stage in the process of Westernization and an obligatory pattern for "latecomers" like Romania. Imitation, he maintained, held the promise of progress in every sphere—from the technical through the sociopolitical to literature and the arts. Modern capitalist development with all its consequences, he sought to prove, was a sociological requisite for Romania and had already begun to pay off. At any rate, "For us [the Romanians] there was no possibility for real progress other than the revolution being followed by evolution in the reverse order, from the form towards the substance."⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*. Lovinescu nonetheless added that, after the constitution of 1866, there was no question about the need for "curbing this

While Lovinescu thus located the modernization drive entirely outside the Romanian cultural-political body, Zeletin identified the movement towards, and the necessary rudiment of, modernity in the socioeconomic restructuring of Romanian society, which he saw as being triggered in the early nineteenth century by the universal onslaught of capitalism. Modern capitalism (and modernity for that matter), Zeletin argued in a quasi-Marxist vein, was a “historical necessity” and as such could neither be avoided nor censured. Although the original stimulus again came from the outside through Western capital and capitalist forms of exchange, it led to a dramatic transformation of society—most notably the emergence of a national bourgeoisie (from boyars, who turned to trade) and a capitalist economy. In light of this, the liberal forms borrowed thereafter, far from being artificial and “inorganic,” appeared perfectly suited to the actual condition of Romanian society and following from the “inevitable” logic of the evolution of modern capitalism.⁹⁵

Despite the different starting points from which the two liberal theoreticians arrived at the defense for the liberal project of modernity, they agreed on its fundamentals: modernity (capitalism) has no alternative; it involves a breach of historical continuity, therefore it is impossible to advocate the conservation of tradition and modernization at the same time; it necessarily entails the destruction of the pre-modern structures; the imported (liberal) forms have a revolutionary role to play in this respect as instruments for social transformation. For the liberals, therefore, the “forms without substance” phenomenon was a real one, but unlike the Junimists and other critics, they considered it to be both inevitable and beneficial. The sweeping modernization of the political sphere, which had started with Prince Cuza’s reforms in the 1860s, followed a correspondingly crude yet lucid syllogism: first and foremost, perforce, had to come the building of the modern state and institutional forms borrowed from the West which, in turn and through consistent policies, had to work for the transformation of the overwhelmingly rural, unindustrialized and poor Romanian society.

revolutionary renovation” and for selectivity—a fact that justified the Junimist critique (“the historic role of Junimism is precisely in this reaction”)—Lovinescu, *T. Maiorescu*, 216–222.

⁹⁵ Ștefan Zeletin, *Burghezia română: Neoliberalismul* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1997); Bálažs Trencsény, “The ‘Münchausenian Moment’: Modernity, Liberalism and Nationalism in the Thought of Ștefan Zeletin,” in *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies*, eds. Bálažs Trencsény et al. (Budapest and Iași, 2001), 61–80.

Because of that, those who refused to succumb to the "logic of history" were an anachronism or reactionaries. Lovinescu fought fiercely against the dominant "traditionalist" and "peasantist" currents of his day and for the rehabilitation of urban values as the only true basis of modern civilization. Zeletin, on the other hand, defined Romanian traditional culture as reactionary, "the rebellion of the medieval elements in our soul against the bourgeois order imposed by the invasion of foreign capitalism into our patriarchal way of life."⁹⁶ The following statement by a liberal follower reads like a manifesto:

Our cultural ideal is dynamic, eager for growth, renewal and fruition. . . . We mean to promote a sense of culture that is European. Our light comes from the West. We see our deliverance in the Occidentalization of this country, many of whose vital organs are petrifying even before it has reached maturity. Balkanism, our cherished and idealized Orientalness . . . now shelters all the brigands who have impeded political purification and opposed lifting the people out of the cultural cesspool in which they wallow. . . . [We seek] the affirmation of our genius and specific character in the forms of European culture, in the harmonious and shining framework of the culture of the West. . . . We have faith that soap, comfort and urbanity, the telegraph and civil law in no way threaten the purity of our race. . . .⁹⁷

So, far from eroding the national culture and identity, contact with the "West," according to the enthusiastic Westernizers, represented a return to the true national self, a nostalgic "homecoming" after centuries of forced alienation and "spiritual separation" from "Europe." It was liberating and unleashed the genuine potential of the national community. Lovinescu's position in this regard is worth noting. His attacks on the "traditionalists" did not undermine the idea of national identity. He had no doubt about the existence of a "national soul"; however, he saw it in a relativistic manner, as subject to change. He advocated the borrowing of Western forms, believing that they would unlock latent creative potential in local social and cultural life. "Synchronism" with the West would help affirm a Romanian-ness with characteristics of its own. Lovinescu thus opposed not the idea of national identity (or essence), but its dogmatization through mysticism, Orthodoxy, romantic sentimentalism and the praise for the primitive peasant spirit.

⁹⁶ Cited in Lucian Boia, *History and Myth*, 36.

⁹⁷ Eugen Filotti, "Gândul nostru," *Cuvântul Liber* 1 (1924, series 2), 2–4, cited in Katherine Verdery, "National Ideology and National Character in Interwar Romania," in *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, eds. Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995), 113–114.

Isolated from the rhythm of Western civilization by its surroundings and its religion, the Romanian people was unable to develop in its own manner and was turned away from the potentialities of its race... our soul was dislocated by infiltrations of Oriental fatalism. Is this the definitive formula for our race?... After ages of alienation and deformation, new prospects have arisen for the creation of a truly Romanian soul. If we seem to some historians melancholy stepchildren of a Roman-Byzantine-Slavic-Turkish-Phanariot tradition, let us hope that in the eyes of future generations, we will appear as venerable forefathers of a true Romanian tradition.⁹⁸

In Serbia and Bulgaria as well, the liberals came to epitomize the pro-Western strategy of development but with specific circumstances largely deriving from far more egalitarian social environments and political cultures. Similar to the Romanian 1848 generation, the generation of Serbian liberals, which came of age in the 1850s and 1860s, fused its faith in rationalist universalism, as embodied in the concepts of “freedom, justice and equality,” with the mystique of popular sovereignty in national-romantic garb. Characteristic of this variant of liberalism in all three countries, but most clearly in Serbia, was the effort to “unearth” the imported political forms from the traditions of the national past. This process of “domesticating” Western modernity, not only on a rhetorical but also on a semantic and functional level, was part of the liberals’ strategy of forging national consolidation by fusing civic nationalism—and the lure of democratic rule—with irredentism.⁹⁹ Due to the underdifferentiated social structure of both Serbia and Bulgaria during the nineteenth century, in contrast to Romania with its traditional gentry, the priority assigned to national consolidation often compelled both government and opposition to resort to populist solutions in the political and social sphere. Here is how Petko Slaveykov, the radical Liberals’ spokesman in the Bulgarian Constituent Assembly, confronted and ultimately carried the vote against the proposal for a Senate (second chamber):

Gentlemen, please, have greater trust in the people, in its prudence, look more closely at it, get to know better its qualities and features and, trust me, you will form a better opinion of it and will rely more on it than on unsuitable and useless selections [of experienced persons]... Let me tell you that a people who carries the burdens and understands where they hurt can think much better and more correctly about itself than privileged persons who might think on its behalf, for even if they had the good will and take it

⁹⁸ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, 458–459.

⁹⁹ For the nationalist aspects of the liberal ideology in Serbia and Romania, see Mishkova, *Prispособyavane na svobodata*, esp. 99–121, 161–192, 221–230.

to their heart to be useful, they find it hard to realize where and how they can help, and many times they scratch where it does not itch. Let the people itself search for a cure for the aches it feels and be sure that it will find it sooner and will be able to adjust it.¹⁰⁰

Although liberals everywhere in the region sought to prioritize the urban sector of the economy, the Serbian and the Bulgarian national-liberals could not afford to pursue this steadfastly at the expense of their rural populations, unlike their Romanian counterparts. Safeguarding the "free and independent peasant" as the social foundation of the national body remained a point of departure for their economic reforms, trying to protect the village from the disruptive forces of the capitalist market. On the political level, their discourse and practices represented a curious combination of liberal norms, egalitarian ethos and authoritarian conduct. The open political system they themselves had created made the liberal modernizers of this "nation-building" generation highly susceptible to the communitarian and egalitarian structures of social organization and to the traditionalist expectations of the "people."

Herein lays the ambiguity of the national-liberal "option" for countries like Serbia and Bulgaria. The synthesis between patriarchal and modern institutions, which it advocated, was not intended to reinstate a lost order or an age-old popular tradition. For the nationalist Serbian and Bulgarian liberals, the possibility of such a synthesis was meant to prove the viability of the modern political institutions in the kind of pre-modern milieu that Serbia and Bulgaria represented in the nineteenth century. Early Balkan liberalisms thus sought to speed up the adoption and assimilation of the modern forms of social organization and especially the nation-state. The result could not help but be ambivalent. The key achievement of the nineteenth-century liberal Westernizers in the Balkans was that they succeeded in creating a modern political system and imposing the idea that their countries could and had to become modern states. But their political reformism went no further than their romantic nationalism did, while the arguments and means they used to legitimize it came to buttress an

¹⁰⁰ Veselin Metodiev, ed., *Dnevniitsi na Uchreditelnoto sãbranie ot 1879 g.* (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2004), 281–282 (Dnevnik XVII). Decades later the well-known lawyer and public figure Petko Staynov called Slaveykov's trust in the people a "democratic mystique," blind to possible excesses of democracy (like suppression of the minority and disregard for the constitution itself) and dubbed him the first Bulgarian populist demagogue: Petko Staynov, *Kompetentnost i narodovlastie* (Sofia, 1923), 96 (note), 112–118.

understanding of the nation that had much less to do with the civic and the individualistic than with the paternalistic and the collectivistic.¹⁰¹

Even so, the national-liberals' important contribution to what one historian of nineteenth-century Serbia called "politics as development"—the creation of a political system capable of sustaining political pluralism and free competition not matched by a correspondingly "developed" social milieu¹⁰²—becomes apparent when we consider the transformations triggered by their politico-institutional legacy since the last third of the nineteenth century. To begin with, the 1880s and the 1890s witnessed the emergence, in both Serbia and Bulgaria, of a much more rigorously modernizing version of liberalism, which exerted a diffuse effect on currents and parties to the left and to the right. In Serbia its stronghold was the Progressive Party, which gathered a number of prominent politicians and intellectuals. During their brief rule between 1880 and 1883, they tried to introduce European forms in rapid succession, with the objective of "making from our patriarchal country a modern European state."¹⁰³ Their Westernizing drive was not only political but included a series of radical reforms in the economy, education, legal system and army.¹⁰⁴ These reforms provoked embittered peasant resistance, which was channeled by the Radical Party through populist agitation and mobilization of the people. This is just one of the numerous indications that the sweeping political and social engineering "from form to substance" proved difficult to implement in the Balkan countries, with the relative exception of Romania—the only one upholding a restrictive electoral system until as late as the end of World War I and where the "oligarchic" political system was sanctioned by the constitution.

Despite their small minority status and lack of popular support, the Serbian Progressives' staunch "Westernism" and consistent denunciation of the populist, authoritarian and hegemonic practices of the ruling Popular-Radicals exerted a disciplining and, in the long run, beneficial effect on the political culture and representation. As pointed out by a student

¹⁰¹ For a comprehensive analysis of pre-World War I Balkan liberalisms, see Diana Mishkova's chapter in this volume.

¹⁰² Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development: The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

¹⁰³ Jaša Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka i struja u Srbiji*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1947), 445.

¹⁰⁴ For more details on the modernization ideology, program and rule of the Serbian Progressives, see Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 115–120, and Mishkova's chapter on Balkan liberalisms in this volume.

of the Serbian prewar political system, the "form" of liberal parliamentarism per se and "the strict parliamentary conventions gradually readjusted the political mentality and culture, stirring the participants in the [political] contest to change their habits and, in time, even their understanding of politics."¹⁰⁵ Within about ten years, several coalition cabinets were formed in Serbia for the first time, creating an atmosphere of greater tolerance towards political opponents in both Parliament and the party press and boosting political pluralism. The momentum thus created induced the breakup of the all-powerful Radical bloc, which opened the door to modern political structuring along group interests rather than traditional (mostly personal) lines.

The liberal solution also had a substantial ripple effect on other currents and "paths." Thus by the beginning of the twentieth century, a notable convergence of opinion had begun to crystallize across the Serbian political spectrum that the country "should walk the same road that all European states are walking." And if many were plainly conscious of the difficulties and deviations accompanying the adaptation of the alien forms to the local environment, almost all agreed that Serbia had made considerable progress and should continue "on the same road." Significantly, the Serbian liberals' opponents on the left came to agree that "among young nations, [where] there is, in sufficient measure, neither tradition, nor consistent work, nor patience in anticipating results, nor loyalty in the implementation of law [...], the form has special importance."¹⁰⁶

Such broad convergence of opinion was especially characteristic of Bulgaria, where the proliferation of liberal parties was conspicuous. As in Serbia, conservatism in Bulgaria lacked the standard social base (landed aristocracy or traditional notables), while liberalism, in the absence of a sizable bourgeoisie and urban middle classes, tended toward populism or radical democracy (or what opponents often dubbed Russian "nihilism").¹⁰⁷ As in Serbia, the village continued to serve as a reservoir of conservative social values, but until the beginning of the twentieth century it had no proper political representation, nor was it given any priority in the modernizing visions of the state. Soon after liberation, the Liberal Party of the

¹⁰⁵ Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija*, 299.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 390, 402.

¹⁰⁷ As remarked with irony by a commentator, "liberalism" in Bulgaria came from absolutist Russia (via graduates from Russian universities) and "conservatism" from the liberal West (i.e., via disciples of Western universities): Dobri Ganchev, *Spomeni, 1864–1887* (Sofia: BAN, 1939), 108. But the so-called Conservatives were actually moderate liberals.

Constituent Assembly, which had rhetorically presumed to speak for the whole “nation,” disintegrated into a number of factions fighting between themselves but sharing a fundamental orientation towards “Europeanization.” The Conservatives lost importance and dissolved, only to re-emerge a few years later as yet another grouping of moderate-liberal Westernizers under the name “People’s Party.” Even if this precludes the possibility of sorting out the Bulgarian liberals according to party affiliation, Bulgarian liberalism as a “diffused” ideology was of prime importance in shaping Bulgaria’s development, carried out by Westernized elites in influential state and public positions. Amid foreign and domestic political crisis, induced by cutting off diplomatic relations with Russia only a few years after the liberation and a sizable domestic opposition to its Russophobe policies, the liberal government of Stefan Stambolov (1887–1894) embarked on a rigorous modernizing program in the areas of law, state administration, economy and education. But in order to neutralize domestic opposition to its anti-Russian course, it drastically curtailed the expressions of political freedom and civil rights as sanctioned by the constitution. In terms of political niceties, therefore, the early history of Bulgarian liberalism had little to boast of. It is not surprising that some of the harshest criticisms on the huge discrepancy between the postulated rule of law and actual practice date precisely from this period.

This was not the case in other areas, though, especially those related to modern state building and administration “à la Europe”; national formation, assigned primarily to obligatory mass education; and the efforts at economic reform. In all those spheres the political elite as a whole shared a common modernizing strategy. The linking of liberal nationalism with “economic advance” was another point of convergence. Significantly, the “industry versus agriculture” debate proved a lost cause, and the former “Conservative” Konstantin Stoilov presided as prime minister (1894–1899) over the first “encouragement of industry” act.¹⁰⁸ The debates on the railroads, which raised both security and economic considerations and ended up with establishing state property on railroads, were part of the same modernization package.

Yet even after the ousting of Stambolov’s repressive government, the effective exercise of liberal rights and freedoms, and of parliamentarism generally, *de facto* remained limited to, or at best manipulated by, a handful of professional politicians and their networks. Lacking in stable influence among the enfranchised mass of the population, they vied for the favor of

¹⁰⁸ More on the debate in Daskalov, *Bălgarskoto obshtestvo*, vol. 1, 311–316.

the royal head and resorted to patronage, thus feeding the political apathy of the electorate. Between the bulk of this electorate—the peasantry—and the state, there emerged a political vacuum in which resistance to “empty forms” was translated into (self-)criticism over the estrangement of the intelligentsia (or the political elite) from the people. As in Serbia, the vacuum would not last long: the auspicious space it opened was occupied by major anti-liberal contenders—Radical populism in Serbia and Agrarian populism in Bulgaria.

But perhaps the most salient legacy of nineteenth-century Balkan liberalism remains the stable implantation of a European “master-form”: that of the modern, territorial-bureaucratic nation-state and of a major European current—nationalism—in the societies of the region. It explains why so few ever questioned the general importance of the “forms” themselves for the Balkan societies set on catching up with the “West.” But it also explains why just as few continued, as the century proceeded, to advocate a wholesale import of new forms. Even in Romania, as we have seen, only a handful of the avowed Westernists considered the copying of Western models to be unconditionally beneficial. What was becoming increasingly apparent in the process was the tenuous dualism between universalist and particularist impulses, rationality and identity, so characteristic of the modern era, which the Balkan “liberal solution” came to epitomize and, precisely for this reason, attracted the laments or frustrations of different groups of disenchanting nationalists.

Ironically, this heightened and informed critical sense was itself the result of the functioning of the “forms,” even if often found imperfect, and of the high “Western” standards of the Balkan critics, rarely faithfully adhered to in the “West” itself. Moreover, as already noted, this critique evolved simultaneously and in a dialogue with the self-critical Western theories and visions of the future, which had undergone a spectacular rise since the turn of the twentieth century. It might be argued that the whole experience of importing modernity in the Balkans made those in different camps realize what Western political theory would acknowledge much later: that there is no universal mode of being modern, or, more specifically, of practicing liberalism or democracy. As a 1912 editorial in a Serbian newspaper stated, “The democratic doctrine is neither a Christian dogma nor a mathematical axiom. It is a shared idea for the whole cultured world, but it also has its specific ideas and principles which hold true for each particular people and each particular time.”¹⁰⁹ Once the

¹⁰⁹ “Naše ideje i rad,” *Odjek*, September 3, 1912 (cited in Dubravka Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija*, 404).

heyday of radical liberalism was over, the prevailing “organicist” stance of the liberals came closer in many respects to that of the “Young Conservatives” (the aforementioned Junimists)—another group of staunch admirers of the “Western model,” but one that envisaged a path towards modernity alternative to the liberal one.

Junimism presents the most significant and thorough expression of modern Balkan conservatism—one of the earliest reactions to the social and political “disharmony” produced by the clash with an “imported civilization” and by the disparities produced by the liberal solutions. “Junimism,” wrote the liberal theoretician Eugen Lovinescu, “stands up as the only organized force of reaction in the face of the liberal revolution,” which had raised “the problem about the evolution [of Romania] not only on the theoretical terrain of culture but also on the practical terrain of political battles.”¹¹⁰ The Junimist doctrine had taken shape since the late 1860s in the writings and parliamentary speeches of Titu Maiorescu (1840–1917), Theodor Rosetti (1837–1923) and Petre P. Carp (1837–1919). Its key philosophical, political and economic concept was evolutionism, perceived not as the veneration of tradition but as a gradual, organic advancement of the Romanian society in accord with its natural environment. The Junimists accused the generation of 1848 of having succumbed to the lure of modern European civilization and rashly introducing its external forms in Romania in total disregard of the deeper historical forces that had produced them in the “West” and which made them inappropriate for Romania. Their critique “was not an individual . . . but a collective act of reaction of a whole generation, which followed the revolutionary generation of 1848 and which, after 1866 [the year of the adoption of the liberal constitution] revolted against the continued revolutionary rhythm with which the consolidation of the state was pursued.”¹¹¹ The laws of progress might have ordained the inevitable triumph of “modernity,” but the latter, the Junimists argued, was not to be imposed through rash imitation, abrupt changes and renunciation of the role of tradition. Development cannot be natural if there is a breach between past and present.

The critique of the 1848–ers’ “Westernizing élan” would henceforth become a common refrain in different ideological discourses (albeit often indiscriminately and unjustly). The Junimists, as the spearhead of this critique, were, in turn, misrepresented as traditionalists, whose

¹¹⁰ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne*, 292, 306.

¹¹¹ Lovinescu, *T. Maiorescu*, 207.

ideas informed various latter-day anti-modernist currents. As a matter of fact, they believed in "progress" and were as convinced as the liberals of the necessity and direction of modernization—"We must declare that our revival can begin only in the spirit of modern culture," Maiorescu stated¹¹²—but on the basis of a more meaningful communication with Europe. Their critical formula about the "forms without substance" was hardly inspired by nostalgia; indeed, their approach to history was emphatically non-Romantic. If the import of foreign "forms" created a "caricature of civilization," as Theodor Rosetti put it, the reason was not that these forms were defective or objectionable in themselves, but that they were incompatible with the *then* mentality and tradition—with the "culture" and social conditions in Romania. It was not the need for modernization that was thus being questioned, not even the foreign borrowings in the spheres of science and culture, which were seen as both inevitable and positive: "Could you point out for me when in history there was a people that grew strong, that became cultured by relying solely on its own forces?" Petre Carp argued in Parliament, "... As a young people, we are in a process of assimilation."¹¹³ What was being questioned was the liberal political and social "revolution from above" and the "presumption that the introduction of Western forms will inevitably produce the same outcomes and will generate the same context as those which the Romanian governing elite admired and evoked as a model."¹¹⁴ Said Petre Carp:

It is only against those who make the mistake of believing that freedoms by themselves can bring practical results, only against them do we declare ourselves, because this mistake brought into being a modern political school [liberalism] that is rushing from one political change to the next... With such a system, we proceed from one cataclysm to another and, in the end, will arrive at hostility between classes and instability of the institutions, which are outright symptoms of the decline of a people.¹¹⁵

Respect for the context and rejection of the social cost of imported modernization—these were the two pillars of the Junimist critique. Its main target, as was shown in the previous section, was the "state class" of liberal politicians and bureaucrats with their constructivist designs, social

¹¹² Titu Maiorescu, *Critice*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Minerva, 1908), 236.

¹¹³ Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. 1, 124–125.

¹¹⁴ Ioan Stanomir and Vlad Laurențiu, eds., *A fi conservator* (Bucharest: Institutul de Cercetări Politice / Editura Meridiane, 2002), 32.

¹¹⁵ Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. 1, 351 (speech to the Chamber on December 4, 1884).

parasitism and “aping servility,” who had assumed, but failed to perform, the role of a *tiers état*.

The Junimist alternative to this “visionary doctrine of theories and utopias” that liberalism represented was, in the words of the Conservative leader Alexandru Marghiloman, a progress based on the “actual development of the collective consciousness.”¹¹⁶ The revolutionary reforms crowned with the 1866 constitution were a *fait accompli* accepted by the Junimists, but “after a period of fast progress, there should be a period of quiet work which will give the newly planted tree the time to take root. . . . After the glorious work of creation, there comes the more modest work of consolidation.”¹¹⁷ Rather than dismantling, “consolidation” meant filling the “empty” forms with substance through the persistent, deliberate work of stimulating “independent individual activity” in industry, manufacturing, commerce and agriculture. Romania, Titu Maiorescu argued in Parliament, was in dire need of “precisely that class of well-off and open-minded merchants, independent industrialists and big manufacturers whose prevalence could be felt in society and whose wealth, prudently acquired, would be a guarantee for the much-needed stability of the state.” To help create such a social foundation, Maiorescu demanded a major shift in the school system away from classical education, which was cultivating the “class of lawyers” and “exploiters of the peasants under the pretext of culture,” toward the training of producers and encouragement for economic activity. Only this could “make possible the rise [of the Romanian state] to the level of a modern state” and provide the constitutional building, as yet fictive and artificial, with a “proper natural base.”¹¹⁸ In the same vein Petre Carp pleaded for the replacement of the “budgetary democracy” of state functionaries with a “genuine democracy of labor.”¹¹⁹ For the Junimists, therefore, filling the forms with substance meant shifting the center of economic activity from the state to the middle class, from politics to entrepreneurship—a course that, in prescriptive terms, was more liberal than that of the nominal Liberals. In the final analysis, the battle between

¹¹⁶ Alexandru Marghiloman, “Doctrina conservatoare,” in *Doctrinile partidelor politice*, ed. Petre Dan (Bucharest: Editura Garamond, 1994), 157, 159.

¹¹⁷ Constantin Gane, *P.P. Carp și locul său în istoria politică a țării*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura Ziarului, 1936), 18–19.

¹¹⁸ Titu Maiorescu, “Discurs asupra reformei școalelor (21–22 ianuarie 1876),” in *Discursuri parlamentare . . .*, 413–436 (cited in *A fi conservator*, 47–56).

¹¹⁹ Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. 1, 203.

the Romanian liberals and Junimists was fought over the means and the "paths," not the goals, of development.

In the process the Junimists' concerns about potential threats to the "national existence" were as overriding as those of the liberals, but of a different nature. Warned Petre Carp: "The countries that prove unable to heal themselves from the disease of rapid reforms are healed by others, but along with their recovery they lose their individuality and vanish as independent nations."¹²⁰ The very identity of Romanian civilization and the guarantee of its real progress were found to reside in its organic evolution, while "utopias, the vague and general ideas implemented in the name of freedom, equality and fraternity, destroy any national development."¹²¹ The aspirations of this kind of conservative nationalism are perhaps best summarized by another conservative thinker, Petre Negulescu (1872–1951):

to give our small nation the opportunity to derive new forms of life, demanded by its new situation, from its proper spiritual foundation, and to assimilate without danger those which it *has to* borrow from abroad. To this extent and from this point of view the conservative party has been, in our political evolution, a national party par excellence.¹²²

These essentially progressivist and modernist tenets of the "forms without substance" theory, drawing inspiration from, and resting on communication with, the West, were subjected to radical reformulations by various conservative offshoots at the turn of the century. Resonating with the broader changes of the sociopolitical and intellectual environment outlined at the beginning of this essay, they signaled a major shift from modernist-conservative to traditionalist and ethno-nationalist solutions. This rupture (and the resulting breach) in outlook and orientation is nicely captured in an exchange between the Junimist Vasile Pogor (1833–1906), epitomizing the former vision, and Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), a mouthpiece of the new ethno-populist currents. In the opinion of Pogor, "...we [the Romanians] have no history. A people that has no literature, art, or past civilization—such a people is not worth the attention of historians..." To which Eminescu retorted: "What you call barbarism, I call the settled wisdom of a people that develops in conformity with its own genius and

¹²⁰ Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. 1, 302; Bulei, *Sistemul politic al României moderne*, 495–496.

¹²¹ Carp, *Discursuri*, vol. 1, 99.

¹²² Negulescu, "Principiul naționalismului în politica conservatoare," in *A fi conservator*, 440.

shuns any mixing with foreigners.”¹²³ Eminescu’s anti-liberal and retrograde vision emphasized the biological nature of development and was typically coined in populist and xenophobic idiom. He saw Romania’s authentic development as being epitomized by its rural economy (which was why it had to be preserved intact) and the Romanian peasant as the incarnation of ethnic purity and high morals, in contrast to city-dwelling foreign “parasites” and superficially Westernized Romanians. His critique was one of modernity and democracy, vehemently opposing Westernization and modernization, and it is not surprising that interwar extreme nationalists and rightists viewed him as their most important forebear. Wrote Eminescu:

The genuine civilization of a people consists not in the adoption of ready-made laws, forms, institutions, labels or foreign gowns. It consists in the natural, organic development of its own powers, of its own faculties. There is no general human civilization, accessible to all people to the same degree and in the same shape, but each people has its own civilization . . . Half-barbarity [ensuing from the adoption of ready-made laws and so on] is not an organic or necessary state, but an illness, a regression, a state of weakness and misery. If there is ever a genuine civilization on earth, it will spring from the old civilizing elements. . . . Legal civilization does not depend on the translation of foreign laws, but on the perfection and completion of our own old laws and judicial life. From one’s own roots, in one’s own depths springs the genuine civilization of a barbarous people; not from the emulation of foreign customs, foreign languages, or foreign institutions. . . . In conclusion, any genuine civilization can only consist of a partial return to the past, to its own sound, healthy elements of development.¹²⁴

Historicism, glorifying autochthonous traditions and folklore, communal solidarity and, above all, rural life and the peasant as repositories of national authenticity came together into a “rustic utopia”¹²⁵ characteristic of a cluster of cultural-political discourses that carried the Junimist ideas forward, in considerably modified form, into the interwar years. One such “mediator” was Constantin Rădulescu-Motru (1868–1957), who merged adherence to contemporary European ideas and rationality with the desire to reconstitute tradition. From German romanticists and, more directly,

¹²³ Cited in Boia, *History and Myth*, 39.

¹²⁴ Mihai Eminescu, “Pseudo-Românul în Semibarbaria lui,” *Timput* (October 25, 1881), as reproduced in *Discourses of Collective Identity*, 200–202.

¹²⁵ Alexandru Duțu, *Ideea de Europa și evoluția conștiinței europene* (Bucharest: ALL Educational, 1999), 188.

Houston Stewart Chamberlain he picked up the distinction between culture and civilization: civilization referred to the material aspects of life, technological progress and forms of social organization, whereas culture (considered the superior sphere) referred to spiritual life—religious beliefs, moral values and scientific and artistic creativity. This distinction, according to Rădulescu-Motru, was one of depth. Civilization touched only the surface of a people's life, while culture permeated deep into its essence. Hence he identified civilization with form and culture with substance, and he applied this formula to Romania's modern development in the vein of the Junimists. He too accused the 1848 generation of having disrupted Romanian cultural continuity and having imposed political institutions alien to the national spirit. The "strongest social organization," he argued, was not the one that complied most closely with "our latest criteria for morality," but that which responded to the "duty above all to preserve intact the unity of one's people vis-à-vis the other peoples"; while "democracy by itself does not in the least safeguard the existence of a democratic people amongst other peoples."¹²⁶ Rădulescu-Motru, however, went further than the Junimists in asserting the rural way of life as the basis of the Romanian nation's future, while praising as harmonious the relations between boyars and peasants and denying the Romanians' ability to develop modern industry and trade.

Serbian Radicalism presents another "hybrid" solution which, by fusing ideas of the Western radical Left with conservative collectivistic egalitarianism, linked modern socialism and autochthonism. One cannot talk about the Serbian Radicals without considering Svetozar Marković's (1846–1875) theoretical legacy, which influenced them deeply. Marković's sociopolitical theory was a Serbian adaptation of the ideas of the 1860s Russian *narodniki*. Like them, he saw the communal forms of Slavic peasant life as a seed for the development of the socialism of the future and for avoiding the erroneous Western way of capitalist exploitation and bureaucratic organization of the state.

Our task is not to eliminate the capitalist economy, which indeed does not exist [in our country], but to turn the small patriarchal property into a

¹²⁶ Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, "Poporanismul politic și democrația conservatoare," *Noua revistă română*, no. 14 (July 12, 1909), 214–215 (cited in Bulei, *Sistemul politic*, 495–496).

collective one and thus to skip a whole historical period of economic development—the period of the capitalist economy.¹²⁷

He saw the Serbian *zadruga* (extended family with joint property) in particular as analogous to the Russian commune (*mir*) and praised it for its principles and morals of solidarity (mutual help and help for the weak), familial love, pure and simple manners and autonomy. The contemporary West, he said, was moving toward socialism, in the sense of increasingly assertively demanding social justice and emancipation from capitalist exploitation and from the legal order and bureaucracy that sustained it. Previous forms of domination were being weakened through the struggles between labor and capital. By virtue of its democratic traditions, the Serbian people possessed exactly what the Western societies had been fighting to achieve in a long series of struggles and errors, and after shedding their most recent (republican and democratic) illusions. The Serbian rulers had made a mistake in adopting forms of civilization from the West that were already being rejected as harmful for progress by the “West” itself, namely absolute monarchy, bureaucratic order, social inequality and class domination. Marković saw the salvation from these ills in a social revolution, which would abolish the monarchy and lead to the unification of all Serbs; the *zadrugas* would then join in bigger communes, and the whole state would come to resemble one big *zadruga*.¹²⁸

Like the erstwhile liberal doctrine, but also in reaction to it, Marković’s socialism sprang from the quest for a social formula that would offer a solution to the problems engendered by traditional society’s clash with the anonymous disruptive forces of modernization and modern civilization. Its anti-capitalist quality, like that of a number of contemporary and latter-day populist doctrines, was at once a product of a modern social thought and the patriarchal environment where it had emerged. This “entanglement” transpires from the fact that Western (capitalist) social organization was rejected on behalf of the native traditional way of life, but conjugated with Western development and socialism as its final destination. The most progressive order avidly coveted in the contemporary “West” thus turned out to have resided in the Serbian past and popular tradition—in other words, the Western future pointed to the Serbian past. Of course, this hierarchical about-face required reinterpreting the “Western path” as being directed toward socialism and of pre-modern

¹²⁷ Cited in Latinka Perović, *Srpski socijalisti 19.veka. Prilog istoriji socialističke misli*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Izdavačka Radna Organizacija RAD, 1985), 300–301.

¹²⁸ Marković, *Srbija na Istoku*, 82–107.

tradition, above all the *zadruga* (and communal life), as compatible with a growing division of labor and the implementation of modern science and technology. This ideology was an ingenuous manifestation of an underdeveloped society that sought a way out of backwardness in its "own" path of development and rejected the social values, institutions and "inhuman ruthlessness" of the West. As pointed out by Latinka Perović:

The socially undifferentiated agrarian society; collective ownership, safeguarded in the *zadruga* and the commune; and popular self-government—these were for Serbian socialists the essential preconditions upon which a path different from that of Western Europe, meaning the path of non-capitalist development, could be charted.¹²⁹

Its ultimate destination was social justice, a "people's state" as the collective owner of capital, organizer of people's production and regulator of equitable distribution.

Serbian Radicalism—the one true mass political movement in a Balkan country before World War I and a leading political factor in the postwar Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—traditionally traced its roots back to Svetozar Marković's socialism. Its remarkable mobilization success among the Serbian peasantry was due to the fact that, unlike doctrinaire socialists, the Radicals were shrewd enough to grasp the potential behind the traditional peasant grievances against bureaucratic system, taxes and state salaries. More importantly, after Marković's early death his *narodnik* socialism evolved clearly into populism with considerably less socialism and much more nationalism. In the hands of the Serbian Radicals, popular tradition itself became an alternative model of development and was made to stand out in fierce confrontation with (what the Radicals defined as) European civilization.¹³⁰

Serbia's material and moral improvement was possible, the Radicals asserted, only if it ensued from the traditional economic and political institutions "in the purest popular spirit." What clearly distinguished their program of reforms was its harmony with the values of the Serbian patriarchal tradition: the opening up of politics, as the party leader Nikola Pašić (1845–1926) put it, "to the people's ideas and people's expectations,

¹²⁹ Latinka Perović, *Srpski socijalisti 19. Veka. Prilog istoriji socialističke misli*, vol. 3 (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 21.

¹³⁰ On Serbian Radicalism and its comparison with Romanian Junimism, see Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 161–219; Diana Mishkova, "The Uses of Tradition and National Identity in the Balkans," in *Balkan Identities: Nation and Memory*, ed. Maria Todorova (London: Hurst, 2004), 269–293.

[its reliance upon] popular traditions and popular aspirations.”¹³¹ The assault on Western capitalism was launched from the positions of patriarchal communitarianism, egalitarianism and primitive democracy. Marković’s successors kept only that part of his socialist agenda that harmonized with the archaic communitarian attitudes and “popular” institutions—reduced bureaucracy, self-rule, equality, less taxation of peasants, and strong economic and distributive functions of the state—while carefully avoiding any element that could estrange the Serbian peasant (such as socialization of property). Understandably then, the Radicals’ anti-capitalism was not equivalent to socialism in the contemporary sense. To the extent that they possessed an economic program, it favored associated labor and cooperation, representing a sort of “third way” economy. As Nikola Pašić put it in 1876,

We want to protect the nation from the mistakes made by Western industrial society, which produced a proletariat and infinite ostentatious wealth. Instead we want to develop industry on the basis of associated labor. We do not agitate to prohibit private property but to bring the peasants into association and to work the land by machinery, because without association, steam engines cannot be used efficiently.¹³²

While the liberal Progressives considered the patriarchal life of the Serbian village to be a “relic of barbarism” and strove to “transform Serbia into a small Western country, in total disregard of everything Serbian and Slavic,” the Radicals, Pašić argued,

assume that the Serbian people possesses so many good and sound institutions and traditions that they only need to be cultivated and complemented by the good institutions that are to be found among the Russian and other Slavic peoples, while taking from the West only technical knowledge and science and using these in agreement with the Slavo-Serbian spirit.¹³³

The “good and sound” institutions and traditions, considered to be “sufficient to safeguard the Serbian people against the pressure of the West

¹³¹ Cited in Perović, *Srpski socijalisti*, vol. 2, 87.

¹³² Nikola Pašić, *Pisma, članci i govori (1872–1891)* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995), 51.

¹³³ This is how Pašić summarized the polar opposition between the Liberal and the Radical projects (Pašić, *Pisma, članci i govori*, 238–239). Pašić’s anti-Western social philosophy is encapsulated in the following statement: “The main objective of our political movement was to preserve the good institutions which conformed to the Serbian spirit and prevent the introduction of new Western institutions which would have disrupted the genuine life of our people and caused confusion in the national development and life” (*ibid.*, 241).

and to bring vitality and advancement to it," were the Orthodox Church, the extended family (*zadruga*) and the "people's state." The Eastern Church, unlike the "absolutist Latin" one, was praised as a "democratic and people's church," bringing "peace and love," and as such, far more apt to "accommodate development, human improvement, innovation and scientific progress." For Pašić,

The commune [*opshtina*] is the soul of the Slav world... It is the beginning of Slav society and the end of Western European development. The Slav commune is capable by further improvement and rearrangement of becoming the basis of the society and the state, while the commune in the Western European world, by contrast, signals an endpoint and, indeed, will be the end of its culture, which is how the present state of things in the West will inevitably finish.¹³⁴

With its collectivist, egalitarian and "brotherly" ethos, the commune, more than any other traditional (and "sacred") institution, carried the germane elements attesting to the superiority of Slav civilization over Western civilization. Finally, the people's state, which "bears the imprint of its creator," was an inherently democratic state: drawing on the social and moral virtues of the commune, it possessed "no superior strata... and everyone feels like a master."¹³⁵ All these institutions and traditions made the Orthodox Slav civilization socially more "progressive" and morally superior to the Western one. The latter's "unnatural, antisocial, egotistic" nature—in fundamental opposition to the former—was sustained by the Catholic Church, individualism and the Western state.

The Radicals' conviction that "Western" capitalism threatened to destroy the national identity of the Serbs by turning them into a "proletarian people" was projected onto, and rationalized in terms of, a deep civilizational division between East and West. To quote Pašić again,

Western Europe and Eastern Europe—these are two utterly different worlds that have never been in agreement... These are two worlds in perpetual cultural, religious, national and economic conflict with each other... In the continuous conflict between East and West, the Serbian people, ever since its settlement on the land that it occupies today, has been on the side of the East.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Ibid., 312–313.

¹³⁵ The most succinct statement of the Radicals' social thought, and a detailed defense of the basic elements of Orthodox Slav civilization, is to be found in Nikola Pašić, "Sloga Srbo-Hrvata," *ibid.*, 285–318.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 304.

The apparent paradox in all that was that the Radicals' "Eastern" option was itself an outcome of the adoption of "Western" institutional forms (most notably, the nation-state), was driven by a modern European social analysis (Marxism) and aspired to what was then the most vanguard society (the "social state").

In developmental terms, therefore, the Radicals sought to forge an alternative, "third" way between East and West—"third" in relation to the means, not the goals. Neither the source nor the aim of their "traditionalist," or populist, discourse was in effect conservative and anti-modernist. Like populism elsewhere, Serbian Radicals' populism sprang from the (largely intellectual) awareness of backwardness and the fear that, by following Western "ways," Serbian society would lose its economic and political independence as well as its identity. It was not a "primitive" indigenous ideology of the peasantry but an ideology of the intelligentsia. Like other populist movements, Serbian Radicalism was premised upon a belief in the possibility of controlling the modernization process; it searched for a synthesis between the basic values of the society and the need for modernization. The Serbian Radicals were not hostile to progress—they actually championed it—but in its populist version, which, far from destroying traditional ways, presumably allowed for their preservation and perfection.¹³⁷ Again, there is a deep ambiguity here, which is why to this day the assessment of the Radicals' long-term impact varies widely. Some (like M. Protić) consider the Radicals active modernizers in the guise of traditionalist rhetoric, while more recently, others (such as L. Perović and A.L. Shemyakin) have reassessed them as perpetrators of pre-modern traditionalism and anti-Westernism.

In time, moreover, the Radicals' position moved away from the original tenets. Since the 1890s and especially after they were firmly established in power in 1903, the Radicals sought to present themselves as a modern political party aspiring to turn Serbia into a modern European state. Their official newspaper, *Samouprava*, stated in 1904:

Have not all modern currents come from the great cultural centers of the West? Or maybe we, the Serbs, have invented the railroads, steam power, the telephone, the electric machines of various constructions, the rotation

¹³⁷ Both Marković and Pašić advocated a Serbian industrialization unaccompanied by class divisions and the creation of a proletariat. This path was supposed to prevent the social upheavals characteristic of Western development. For them it was vital that Serbia benefited from the scientific and technological achievements of the West without losing its distinctiveness.

machines...? Or wasn't our original legislation, too, born on the pattern of the legislation of the cultured countries? Isn't our whole state system in every detail a faithful image of the heavy state apparatus in the European countries?¹³⁸

Rather than cultivating the "good and sound institutions and traditions" of the people in a "Slavo-Serbian spirit," the Radicals were paying increasing attention to the inadequate state of Serbian political culture and advocating the "civic education" of the urban strata—"bourgeoisie, proletariat, small officialdom"—as a requisite for the country's "successful development into a modern state." "Through perseverance and tireless work we should educate ourselves into the civic virtues and rise to the level of a truly free and free-thinking nation."¹³⁹ At the same time their modern conceptions, particularly those concerning the nature of social equality and democracy, continued to be informed by the inherited political thinking that prioritized collectivist and egalitarian values. Present-day analysts tend to interpret the Popular Radicals' visions of development in terms of theories treating modernization as a "dichotomic phenomenon where elements of the traditional and the modern are not always opposed to each other but often exist in parallel and simultaneously."¹⁴⁰ The traditional and the modern Serbian political cultures, from this perspective, appear to be in constant competition. Though specific historical circumstances gave precedence to one or the other, in the end, they sustained the Serbian elites' deep ambiguity of being "at once a carrier of and a brake to modernization."

While in the developmental scenarios discussed above—liberal, conservative and populist-radical—the main issue was the adaptation of the (institutional and legal) "forms" to sociocultural realities, with Marxist socialism it was about matching ideas to realities (and vice versa).¹⁴¹ The ideas in question were developed in the industrialized and urbanized Western societies with sizable working classes, while the realities were the predominantly agrarian Balkan societies. The problem of transplanting ideas was logically similar to transplanting "forms" (though without

¹³⁸ "Radikalni protivnici," *Samouprava*, July 5, 1904 (cited in Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija*, 402).

¹³⁹ *Samouprava*, January 4, 1906 (cited in Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija*, 399–400).

¹⁴⁰ Dubravka Stojanović, "Recepcija ideala slobode, jednakosti i bratstva kod srpske elite početkom 20. veka," in *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20. veka. 3. Uloga elita* (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 2003), 100–102.

¹⁴¹ For more details, see the chapter on socialism by Blagovest Njagulov in this volume.

the practicalities). As the Bulgarian revisionist socialist Yanko Sakăzov put it, in a letter to Karl Kautsky: "the birth of an idea becomes necessary *after* a change of things, but what if this idea is transplanted in another, as yet not so developed land... In this case, is not the idea the *primus motorus*?"¹⁴²

Unlike early populist (*narodnik*) socialism, which hoped to avoid capitalism, Marxist ("scientific") socialism held that capitalism and industrialization were a necessary stage in the development of the relations of production, and that only after the "exhaustion" of capitalism would the time be ripe for a socialist revolution. This was the position of the founding father of socialism in Bulgaria, Dimităr Blagoev (1856–1924), reinforced in his case by a belief in the objective "laws" of historical development and the inevitability of socialism, which he derived from Georgi Plekhanov.¹⁴³ But first it had to be demonstrated that industrialization and capitalism were underway in a rural post-liberation Bulgaria, and one of Blagoev's first brochures was characteristically entitled: "What Is Socialism and Can It Strike Root in Our Country?" On this question he debated the *narodnik* Prokopiev (the pen name of Debogori-Mokrievich), a Russian émigré, who argued that Marxism was not applicable in an agrarian country like Bulgaria, where capitalism had not yet developed, and contested Marx's thesis of the inevitability of land concentration. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Blagoev conducted another debate on the prospects of peasant agriculture in Bulgaria with the "bourgeois democrat" Todor Vlaykov (1865–1943), who insisted on the resilience and viability of peasant agriculture and handicrafts, and proposed measures to strengthen them.¹⁴⁴ Blagoev was convinced that the artisans and the peasants were doomed to ruin and be turned into proletarians. He worked these assumptions into his descriptions and analyses, with a good deal of misrepresentation. He was not deterred by the social price thus paid for "progress" and welcomed industrialization, which was creating a proletariat

¹⁴² "J. Sakăzov, zu K. Kautsky, 18. 5. 1903," in *Karl Kautsky und die Sozialdemokratie Süd-osteuropas. Korrespondenz 1883–1938*, eds. Georges Haupt, Janos Jemnitz and Leo van Rossum (Frankfurt am Main and New York: Campus, 1986), 90.

¹⁴³ Marxist socialism established itself in Bulgaria after a period of gestation in the 1880s, when diverse ideas coexisted, drawn from Proudhon, Lassalle, Blanc, Bakunin and Lavrov as well as Marx. The passage from populist-oriented socialism to Marxism occurred first through the Russian connection (Blagoev) and then increasingly under the influence of the German social democrats. The Socialist Party was founded in 1891.

¹⁴⁴ See Dimităr Blagoev, *Ikonomicheskoto razvitie na Bălgariya. Industriya ili zemedelie?* (Varna, 1903). Vlaykov wrote a series of articles on the "agrarian question" in the journal *Demokraticheski pregled* (1904–1905).

as a "seedbed" for socialist teaching as well as a revolutionary force. As economic historian Alexander Gershenkron noted, in his enthusiasm for capitalist development and readiness to use state policies to encourage it, Blagoev, a product of the Russian revolutionary movement and a disciple of Plekhanov, far surpassed the capitalist businessman and prime minister Ivan Evstatiev Geshov, an advocate of active industrialization policies who had studied firsthand the textile factories of Lancashire.¹⁴⁵ In fact, Blagoev represented one of the two socialist branches, known as the "narrow" socialists, who claimed to uphold the purity of Marxist doctrine and would eventually become Bolshevized (and canonized by the communist historiography as forerunners). The "narrow" were known for their uncompromising attitudes on many issues. Faced with economic and social realities sharply at odds with their teaching, they refused to modify their ideas and chose to ignore or misrepresent the realities.

More relevant to our theme is the "deviant" (revisionist) current of Marxism in Bulgaria, also known as the "broad" socialism represented by Yanko Sakazov (1860–1941) and connected with the revisionist stream of German social democracy (especially Eduard Bernstein). The "broad" and the "narrow" socialists ultimately split in 1903, after fierce disagreements over whether the socialist movement should organize as a union or a party, whether their main activities should be economic or political, whether to convert the emerging workers' trade unions to socialism or observe "neutrality," and finally, whether the party profile and membership should be broad or more restricted. But the basic issue of contention was the social milieu that the socialist propaganda had to target and recruit support from—industrial workers only (who then hardly existed) or the broader "productive strata," and the agenda—a "maximum program" of fighting for socialism or a broader democratic platform, and, on a related note, the attitude towards the peasants and whether the socialists should enter coalitions with other parties. The "broad," who eventually gravitated toward social democracy, advocated propaganda among the widest "productive strata," including peasants and craftsmen, in the name of a unifying democratic agenda, with socialism relegated to the background (and the issue of private property left open), as well as collaboration and coalitions with various democratic forces against

¹⁴⁵ Alexander Gerschenkron, "Some Aspects of Industrialization in Bulgaria, 1878–1939," in Alexander Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1966), 198–234, 218–219.

undemocratic regimes (such as Stambolov's "dictatorship" and the royal "personal regime"). In general, the "broad" took democratic legality—constitutionalism, rule of law, civic participation—seriously as a base for the establishment of socialism, while Blagoev and the "narrow" were contemptuous of "bourgeois" democracy, treating it as just a step toward the socialist goals.¹⁴⁶

In fact, all "deviations" (or "concessions") of the Bulgarian "broad socialist" as a brand of revisionism attest precisely to the predicament of a highly modernist ideology being confronted with divergent realities and the effects of a very different milieu upon the doctrine. The socialists found themselves in a number of contradictions because of the conditions of under-industrialization and nascent capitalism. To begin with, they were supposed to castigate capitalist development (and speak of the evils of industrialization) in an agrarian country in urgent need of economic development along capitalist lines; hence the contradiction of being simultaneously critics and promoters of capitalism and industrialization. Secondly, they had to advocate socialism in the absence of a sizable proletariat and amidst a mass of small owners. The latter were peasants and artisans, who, according to the doctrine, were expected to come to ruin and diminish in number, but instead stubbornly stuck to their status and mentality. Hence their interests and aspirations had to be taken into consideration (while forsaking the abolition of private property) and defended, assuming a populist stance. Especially embarrassing was the prevalence of the peasants—the most backward class in Marxist terms, which, in contradiction with Marxist orthodoxy, showed great revolutionary zeal of their own and got emancipated from initial socialist tutelage. Thirdly, the weaknesses in practicing constitutionalism,

¹⁴⁶ The position of the "broad" is most consistently developed by Yanko Sakazov, *Trevoga za prizratsi. Nasheto otstăpnichestvo ili tyahnoto nedomislie* (Sofia: Fondatsiya "Yanko Sakuzov," 1991; first published in 1903). For the polemics of the "narrow," see Dimităr Blagoev, "Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsializma u nas," in Dimităr Blagoev, *Izbrani istoricheski proizvedeniya*, ed. Maria Veleva (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1985, first published in 1906), 181–556, esp. 260–433, 465–548; Dimităr Blagoev, *Protiv revizionizma. Sbornik* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1973). A good contemporary account on the differences between "broad" and "narrow" is Todor Vlaykov, "Sotsializmăt i sotsialisticheskite partii u nas," in *Săchineniya na Todor G. Vlaikov*, vol. 5 (Sofia, 1930), 339–348. See also Joseph Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria: Origins and Development, 1883–1936* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). For an insightful presentation of Bulgarian socialism, see Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths Towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 157–300, esp. 168, 226–231, 268.

rule of law and liberal democracy compelled the socialists to seek to address and correct these, thus doing the work of the bourgeoisie, and to act as a sort of radical democratic opposition, leaving the socialist agenda for a later time.¹⁴⁷ Of course, for the "broad" all this meant moving away from a class party of the proletariat with a socialist agenda towards a "radical democratic" oppositional stance fighting against the violations of liberal polity, with the result of "diluting" the socialist doctrine and a loss of identity (as the "narrow" recognized and refused to do).¹⁴⁸

Bulgarian "broad" socialism, as shown convincingly by Augusta Dimou, was not a simple reflection of the revisionist debate then underway within the influential German social democratic movement. Instead, it was an imaginative reworking and adaptation of the Marxist doctrine to align it with the local conditions of "backwardness." It can be interpreted as an attempt to "synthesize" and reconcile the aforementioned contradictory roles and thus as a road "in between" populism (Serbian Radicalism), which hoped to "skip" the capitalist phase, and Western social democracy, which was predicated upon it. More specifically, "it provided space for varied paths to socialism." Thus it helped socialists, who had problems applying the Western scenario of development to their own countries, to make sense of their (by Marxist standards) "backward" societies. Revisionism thus meant one thing in the Western context, namely, a debate on the future of advanced industrial capitalism and how to reconcile revolutionary theory with reform practices, and quite another in the Bulgarian context, where it was more about the development of capitalism itself. While Sakăzov's "common cause" and relativization of class conflict via political collaborations was borrowed from Bernstein's proposition for a broad coalition between workers and peasants and from his understanding of representative democracy as a higher form of civilization, it was particularly suitable for the social composition of "backward" (peasant) countries and "allowed for the incorporation of the middle classes into a socialist scenario." It also allowed for a meaningful political intervention in favor of democratization of the political process.¹⁴⁹

Socialism in Romania was pioneered by Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (born Solomon Katz, 1855–1920), a Jewish émigré from Ukraine, who started as a populist (*narodnik*) in the "Going-to-the-People" campaign

¹⁴⁷ Dimou, *Entangled Paths*, 160–161, 197–199, 216–217, 274–275.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 205–207, 232–239.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 274–275 and 276.

and crossed over to Romania to evade police persecution.¹⁵⁰ Frustrated by the failure of the populist movement, he turned to Marxism and in 1893 founded the Romanian Social Democratic Labor Party. In trying to apply Marxism to the specific problems of an agrarian society, Gherea developed original views, also stimulated by a debate with agrarian populism (and its chief exponent in Romania, Constantin Stere). He remained quite independent of the revisionist controversy within the Second International because he deemed the debated issues to be irrelevant to Romania. Gherea was convinced that, because of the irresistible impact of advanced capitalism, underdeveloped societies were bound to follow the same road, and pass the same “stages,” as Western Europe, meaning industrialization and capitalism. He even formulated this as a “law of development for backward societies”:

Backward countries enter the orbit of advanced capitalist countries, they move in the orbit of these countries, and their whole life, development, and social evolution are determined by the life and movement of advanced countries and the historical era in which they exist—by the era of bourgeois capitalism.¹⁵¹

Gherea maintained that a kind of capitalism was already underway in Romania, albeit one coexisting with medieval remnants, due to the commercial relations and the ascendancy of merchant capital that were undermining the old mode of production. From these premises Gherea predicted that “socialism would be brought to the underdeveloped countries of Eastern Europe on Western wings.”¹⁵² That modern industrial capitalism would be the outcome of Romania’s commercial relations with the West was, however, contested by his agrarian-populist opponents, thus replicating the debate between Marxists and Populists in Russia.

While declaring that undeveloped societies would pass through the same stages of development as the advanced ones, Gherea envisioned a different mechanism for that. Marx’s fundamental hypothesis about the correspondence between political and legal “superstructure” and economic

¹⁵⁰ Michael Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism,” *Slavonic and East-European Review* 55, no. 1 (1977), 65–89; Michael Shafir, “Romania’s Marx and the National Question: Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” *History of Political Thought* 5, no. 2 (1984), 295–314; Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947*, 75–78. See the basic works of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoiobăgia* (Bucharest: Soccec, 1910); *Asupra socialismului în țările înapoiate* (Bucharest: Cercul de editură socialistă, 1911).

¹⁵¹ Cited in Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 74.

¹⁵² Michael Shafir, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Studia Europaea* 52, no. 2 (2007), 23.

"base" did not seem to work in Romania, where a modern constitutional and parliamentary monarchy characteristic of a "capitalist mode of production" was hoisted upon a pre-modern economic foundation of backward agriculture, made up of big estates of wealthy landlords and dependent peasants, and a nascent industry. In backward capitalist societies, therefore, the "legal and political superstructure" determined "the economic structure" of the society, argued Gherea, thus reversing the causal relationship postulated by Marx. This essentially meant reformulating the traditional Romanian "form-substance" debate in Marxist terms, which resonated with the radical liberal visions, in that the "form" became the dynamic factor and took the lead in the evolution. To quote Gherea:

...one of Marx's greatest sociological discoveries is that the political and social forms of society depend on its economic and social base, that the political and social forms change after a corresponding change has taken place in the mode of production and distribution of wealth or in the material foundation of society; that is, that forms always follow substance. But... in backward capitalist countries, like Rumania, a political and social form has been introduced without having a corresponding material foundation; instead, the base develops afterwards; our country is, therefore, the contrary to those Marx speaks about, for here it is the base that follows the form.¹⁵³

This was complemented by a theory of emulation, similar to that formulated by Eugen Lovinescu two decades later, postulating external borrowing as a mainspring of development in undeveloped societies: the latter readily assimilate the imports forced upon them by the advanced societies in order to accelerate their own development. Thus, according to Gherea, in such societies the transition from capitalism to socialism would be quicker and smoother—a sort of "advantage of backwardness." All this amounts to an early theory of underdevelopment from a Marxist perspective, whereby backwardness is an intermediate and passing phase in an inexorable evolutionary process toward industrial capitalism, premised upon the Marxist assumption of unilineal progress, in which the possibilities of regression or permanent stagnation or a different outcome are ruled out.¹⁵⁴ In the end Gherea made little allowance for the structural peculiarities of an agrarian economy, which he viewed as being subjected to the same laws of capital accumulation and competition that Marx had postulated for the industrial societies.

¹⁵³ Cited in Kitch, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea," 76–77.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 75–76, 78–79.

Based on his concept of backwardness, Gherea provided an incisive analysis of contemporary Romania from a Marxist perspective in his *Neoîobăgia* (Neo-Serfdom) (1910), written in the wake of the 1907 peasant uprising. There he described the agrarian economy of Romania as a mixture of feudal and capitalist elements ("dual regime") long after the emancipation of the peasants in 1864. While the peasants were formally free, they were *de facto* bound to the landlords in a kind of neo-serfdom relation by a variety of arrangements such as the "principle of inalienability" of inadequate land properties (which amounted to being bound to the land), conversion of the peasants' debts into labor obligations, and so on. The deplorable situation could only be changed, in his view, by abolishing feudal relations in agriculture and setting the capitalist forces free by introducing modern methods of farming and large-scale capitalist agrarian enterprises. To achieve that, he relied on the political intervention of the state. The agrarian problem, according to him, could only be solved with the transition to industrial capitalism, which entailed expropriation of the peasants. Gherea rejected the faith of the Romanian agrarian populists (Poporanists) in smallholder agriculture, supported by cooperatives. Envisioning a developed industrial society, he ridiculed Constantin Stere's ideas about a "rural democracy" of independent peasant proprietors and limited, small-scale industrialization as a kind of "rustic, idyllic society."

In practical terms, however, the socialist movement in Romania failed completely. In their enthusiastic support for capitalist development, the socialists shared a great deal with the Liberals, and in their democratic program (and non-violent and legal tactics) they were quite close to the Populists (*narodniki*). This made them especially vulnerable to liberal and populist criticisms and cajoling. They proved unable to project a distinctly socialist profile and play an independent political role or present a convincing alternative (Stere called them "an exotic plant"). Gherea's analysis of Romania and his inferences, though valid, could not sustain the *raison d'être* (and morale) of a social-democratic party. The blurring of identity and loss of confidence finally resulted in the disintegration of the first Romanian socialist party, in 1900, and the defection of most of its adherents (called the *generoși*—generous ones) to the Liberal Party.

Industrial socialism (respectively, social democracy) was a quintessentially Western import with the greatest possible mismatch with the actual Balkan realities. It was based on the most advanced societies in the West and, according to its own "periodization," presented a vision of the future two stages ahead of where the Balkan societies then were. Its attraction for Balkan intellectuals, who were its primary promoters, was

due to its critical potential and promises for a bright—prosperous and socially just—future. The attempts to make sense of the socialist doctrine in the unsuitable Balkan circumstances led to two opposite outcomes. Independent-minded socialists, sensitive to the weight of the existing socioeconomic conditions, were driven to various forms of revisionism of the orthodoxy, which, however, threatened them with a loss of purpose and identity. Doctrinaire Marxists dealt with the mismatch by misrepresenting the reality, which allowed them to remain true to the doctrine. Unlike (Radical or agrarian) populism, Marxist socialism did not shun capitalist development, which it saw as a necessary precondition of future socialism, not least because it created the proletariat as its revolutionary force. Thus it shared with liberalism the belief in a Western path of development as a premise of its teachings. The question was how to accelerate the development along this path, and it was even more so for the socialists, for whom capitalism was a transient stage, than for the liberals. The predicament of backwardness seemed to require radical solutions, and, ultimately, a radical revolutionary cure.

However, those who embraced it totally shifted orientations. With the Bolshevization of radical Balkan socialism after the Russian Revolution, capitalism and, along with it, Europe and the "West," would be rejected most strongly. An alternative project of modernization was underway in the Soviet Union, based on the nationalization of property, forced collectivization, intensified industrialization, and so on, all under the direction of a communist, rather than "proletarian," dictatorship. In the Balkans this project was embraced by local communists guided by Moscow with no room for "negotiating" or "adapting" it to local conditions until after World War II, when the victorious Soviet Union coercively implemented it in most of the region.

In contrast with Marxist socialism, peasantism (or agrarianism) took the overriding agrarian condition of the Balkan countries seriously as more or less permanent.¹⁵⁵ It was preceded and influenced by the native populists,

¹⁵⁵ For descriptions of the agrarian ideology from agrarian authors, see Branko M. Peselj, "Peasantism: Its Ideology and Achievements," in *Challenge in Eastern Europe*, ed. Cyril Black (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 109–131; George M. Dimitrov, "Agrarianism," in *European Ideologies*, ed. F. Gross (New York, 1948), 396–452. See also Piterim Sorokin, *Ideologiya agrarizma* (Prague and Sofia, 1924). A sympathetic description of the peasantist ideology and political agenda appears in David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (New York: Collier Books, 1961, first edition 1951), 139–156. For more distanced and critical analyses, see George Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in Eastern Europe, 1919–1930* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966),

who shared many of the ideas of the Russian populists (*narodniki*), but applied them selectively and with significant changes. Characteristic of the Russian *narodniki* was the belief (first formulated by Herzen and Chernyshevski) that Russia could bypass the capitalist stage of development and proceed directly to an ideal communist society. According to them, this could be done by basing the country's development on the peasant commune (*mir*) and the (artisanal) *artel*, which had preserved the communal form of existence and ethos—a kind of agrarian socialism. Russian populism also developed a theory of the relation between the elite (intelligentsia) and the masses (people), at one point postulating the “hegemony of the masses” over the educated elite, but in earlier and later versions proposing that the intelligentsia lead the “people.”¹⁵⁶ The Balkan agrarian populists (Constantin Stere in Romania, Antun Radić in Croatia, some Bulgarian *narodniki*), while eager to avoid the evils of capitalism, were not keen on inaugurating a communist society, with its rejection of private property (with the exception of the earlier socialist type of populism of Svetozar Marković). Rather than a communist future, they looked for another alternative to capitalism, thus anticipating the “third way” of the peasants. Coming from newly created nation-states with liberal institutions, they were also more “legalist” and “evolutionist” and less revolutionary than the Russian *narodniki* in their struggles against the obstinate Russian autocracy. In this respect they were closer to Russian “legal populism” (and Nikolai Mikhailovski was a common reference for them).¹⁵⁷

The transformation of the agrarian populist ideas in their adaptation to the different Balkan realities is exemplified by the ideas of the leading ideologue of Romanian Poporanism (from *popor*—“people”), Constantin Stere (1865–1936).¹⁵⁸ He took the doctrine of a “separate path” from the Russian *narodniki* but revised it in accordance with the structure of Romanian society. This doctrine was grounded in the economic analysis of Russian social critics like Vasily Vorontsov and Nikolai Danielson, who

40–48; Heinz Gollwitzer, “Europäische Bauerndemokratie im 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Europäische Bauernpartien im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz Gollwitzer (Stuttgart and New York: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1977), 1–82, esp. 34–47.

¹⁵⁶ Richard Pipes, “Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry,” *Slavic Review*, 23, no. 3 (1964), 441–458.

¹⁵⁷ Ghița Ionescu, “Eastern Europe,” in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, eds. Ghița Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 97–121, esp. 98–106.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 53, no. 131 (1975), 248–271. See also Hitchens, *Rumania*, 71–75.

argued that Russia could avoid state-driven capitalism and take a different course of development based on the popular (peasant) sector of the economy, meaning the peasant commune. In Stere's interpretation the original distinction between the "popular" (implicitly: communal) and "capitalist" mode of production was replaced by agriculture and industry (with no reference to modes of production). The Romanian "separate path" referred to a primarily agricultural development (not industrialization), which, however, did not preclude the development of capitalism even in an agricultural economy. Unlike Russian *narodniki*, Stere did not attempt to demonstrate that Romania's development would end in socialism, and he left open the question of what relations of production and exchange would prevail. He insisted that the peasants should own their land and that "small capitalist enterprises" should dominate in the industrial sector.

From these starting positions Stere elaborated his "peasantist" ideas of Romania as an essentially agrarian country, where the industrial capitalism pursued up until then through state initiatives was both undesirable (because it overburdened the peasantry) and impossible (because it could not compete on the international markets). He sharply disagreed with the Romanian social democrats about the inevitability of industrial development and thought that Romania was destined to remain an agrarian country and a "peasant society"; it would not replicate the Western development but would steer an autonomous course. Peasants were, in his view, a distinct social category, neither proletariat nor bourgeoisie, who formed the foundation of Romanian social structure, upon which the other classes were posed. He viewed the village as a specific civilization—authentic and valuable—in contrast to the artificial urban lifestyle. For Stere economic progress in Romania was only possible through a radical transformation of the agrarian sector. His program for agrarian reform included the redistribution of the large estates among the peasants (in return for compensation), promotion of village cooperatives and their support by credit institutions, and mass education—all this leading to a vigorous and progressive peasantry. Industry was assigned a subordinate and auxiliary role to agriculture in the form of cottage industries for agricultural products in the countryside, small capitalist enterprises in the towns, state monopolies (protected from foreign capital) for processing natural resources and providing social services as transportation and communications. Most importantly, he envisioned the transfer of political power to the peasantry and the establishment of a genuine "rural democracy" (or "peasant democracy") in Romania. This had to be achieved by

full enfranchisement of the peasantry through a reform of the electoral law, the strengthening of local self-government, and so on. This vision of “peasant democracy” was one of a harmonious society different from both capitalism and socialism, where the peasant was a prototype of the “ideal man” of the future.

On the question of how to implement these ideas, Stere was strictly reformist and legalistic, not revolutionary, not least because he was afraid that a domestic upheaval might invite foreign intervention, especially by Russia, thus jeopardizing national independence. He relied on the goodwill of the Romanian elites, whether intellectuals (whom he entrusted with special responsibility) or big landowners or the bourgeoisie. However, he was skeptical about the ability of the peasantry itself (which was still living under semi-servile conditions) to undertake conscious and organized action. In this respect he differed sharply from the later peasantists, whose views were formed in the very different circumstances after the agrarian reform. While criticizing the generation of 1848 for deviating from the “organic” path of development by adopting attractive-looking Western models, Stere was not anti-European and was ready to implement useful European innovations, such as the cooperatives, in Romania.

The peasantists (or agrarians) were successors of the populists and organizers of massive peasant movements and parties. Above and beyond national differences, peasantism in the Balkans (and most of Eastern Europe) shared a number of common principles: priority for agriculture over industry (and preference for the “natural” industries, that is, those based on agriculture and the country’s natural resources); belief in, and support for, small and medium-size peasant ownership (also called “labor property”); land reform to break up the large estates (in return for compensation) and supply poor peasants with land; suspicion of (large-scale) industrial and financial capitalism; and cooperatives as a means to compensate for the deficiencies of smallholder peasant agriculture and to ensure agricultural progress. On the political level, such common principles were parliamentary rule with the extension of political rights to all citizens, and, as a consequence, a form of “peasant democracy” (or “peasant state”) to empower the peasantry and reduce the political weight of urban-based oligarchies; strict legality; administrative decentralization; and a pacifist foreign policy. Peasantism rested upon certain value premises (sometimes called a “peasant mystique”): that peasants and their way of life were an utmost value, either because of the nature of agrarian labor (and attachment to the land) or as preservers of national qualities and virtues. Complementing this was a teleological philosophy of history (mirroring the communist teleology of Marxism), where peasants featured as

a "fifth estate" that would ascend after the "third" (bourgeoisie) and the "fourth estate" (workers).¹⁵⁹

The peasantists formulated most clearly the idea of a "third way," neither capitalism nor socialism (communism), following neither the path of the "West" nor that of the Russian "East," but leading to an altogether different society. In its most extreme version, the third way consisted of the affirmation of peasant societies, based on an agrarian economy of smallholders in the framework of democratic peasant polities (a "peasant state"). Industry would be allowed to develop on a limited basis, but capitalism had to be eliminated, especially from agriculture. The other name for this third-way economy was cooperativism, by virtue of the great hopes placed on cooperatives for restricting and even eliminating capitalism. It was thus premised upon the preservation of the peasants, who formed the vast majority of the population in the Balkan (and most Eastern European) countries, as the social backbone of society. This was an ideal (or, to critics, a utopia) of the small proprietors and direct producers, rural as well as urban. They had to be protected both from the exploitation by capitalism (financial, agrarian, or other) and from the threat of expropriation by a communist revolution.

Few among the peasant movements in Eastern Europe came to this radical ideal of a "third way"; the majority sought to protect peasant interests within a capitalist economy. As pointed out by some recent analysts, the radical "third way" (and comprehensive cooperativism)—that is, the pursuit of an alternative to the existing capitalist system and bourgeois political establishment—was characteristic of societies considered to be less developed (with a lower gross national product and a more rurally based population) and those with a higher proportion of petty farmers and lesser social differentiation, where the remnants of a traditional social structure were still powerful. Such radical third-way views emerged mostly in Bulgaria and Serbia, and to a lesser extent in Romania and Croatia (and, outside the Balkans, among left-wing currents in Hungary and Poland).¹⁶⁰

We will not go into an analysis here of the individual agrarian movements and their national specifics, which are treated separately in this

¹⁵⁹ Rudolf Herzeg, *Die Ideologie der kroatischen Bauernbewegung* (Zagreb: Rudolf Herceg und Genossen, 1923), 21–45, esp. 42–45.

¹⁶⁰ Lyuben Berov, "The Idea of a 'Cooperative Society' in East European Peasant Movements during the Inter-War Period," in *Modern Age—Modern Historian: In Memoriam Gyorgy Ranki (1930–1988)*, ed. Ferenc Glatz (Budapest: Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1990), 265–286.

volume. It is enough to note that the peasantist vision had to compromise with the realities of capitalism and the bourgeois establishment and with other political forces. That was the case in Bulgaria after the radical Agrarianist government of Aleksandăr Stamboliyski (1919–1923), which was brought down with a military coup d'état and followed by bloody suppression of the Agrarians. Seeking accommodation with the economic and political establishment (and with certain impulses from the moderate Czech-dominated Green International in Prague), peasantism evolved in the direction of an ideology of the “middle classes” between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, capital and labor. Peasant parties assigned to themselves the function of cushioning and mitigating class conflict and of political mediation (via coalition governments). The more radical peasant visions survived and were developed further by the left-wing currents that emerged in most peasant movements, for instance, around Mihail Genovski in Bulgaria, Dragoljub Jovanović in Serbia and Mihai Ralea in Romania. In such leftist blueprints, the whole society and the state had to be organized along cooperative lines within a “cooperative society,” “cooperative state” or “labor state” (*zadružna država, država rada*). Capitalism (big business) was rejected in principle as exploitative, and economic activities requiring bigger scale (extraction industries, credit, foreign trade) had to be nationalized.¹⁶¹ The most radical versions of cooperativism actually amounted to a kind of bureaucratic state socialism: total cooperativization (although it remained unclear how it could be carried out), elimination of capitalism, central planning and abolition of competition and profit. It was in such left-wing projects that agrarianism and socialism met once again after the early agrarian-socialist populism, this time within an even more sweeping and radical formula.

The opponents of peasantism from both Left and Right and many economists of development have argued that it presents an anti-modern vision that idealizes, and aims at conserving, a backward way of life—anti-urban and anti-industrial, and have denied it (and its ideal of smallholder agriculture) modernization potential altogether. On the other hand, the peasant leaders and ideologists have claimed that theirs is a modernizing vision,

¹⁶¹ Mihail Genovski, *Obshtestvenost i kultura* (Sofia, 1939). See also Lyuben Berov, “Văzgleđi na levitsata na BZNS odnosno oblika na bādeshteto choveshko obshtestvo, 1920–1939,” *Istoricheski pregled* 46, no. 3 (1990), 3–22; Dragoljub Jovanović, “Osnovna načela,” in Dragoljub Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha. Izbrane političke rasprave*, eds. Nadežda Jovanović and Božidar Jakšić (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, Naučna knjiga, 1991; first published in 1940), 84–91. Further elaboration is provided in Dragoljub Jovanović, “Socijalizam i seljaštvo,” in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 166–196.

especially with regard to agriculture and rural life. To quote Aleksandăr Stamboliyski (1879–1923), the leader of the Bulgarian peasant movement:

In 20 years Bulgaria will become a model of an agrarian state, whose towns and villages will get rid of the crooked muddy streets and of the people's blood-suckers. They will be provided with pure, healthy drinking water, with forested parks, with modern chemical fertilizers, with telegraph and telephone and electric lighting. They will have highly developed cooperatives, a broad railway network with warehouses for grain and tobacco at every railway station. Each village will have its House for Agrarian Democracy, where lectures and movies will be presented and the peasants will be able to listen to the best speeches of the best orators on a gramophone plate.¹⁶²

In fact, the preservation of the peasantry as a social *sine qua non* envisioned economic and technological development within a static social framework. However, even if some advantages were granted to small-holder agriculture, these could easily evaporate under changed technological or commercial conditions. So even if the Agrarians aspired toward progressive modern agriculture that would serve as a basis for industry as well, theirs was a program for socially conditioned and controlled modernization—"reluctant modernizers," as one author put it, in view of their emphasis on solidarity and social justice at the expense of economic efficiency.¹⁶³

In a sense peasantism and its "third way" represented a response of largely peasant societies to the challenge posed by the dynamic and expansionist industrial-capitalist West. As an expression of the interests and apprehensions of the Balkan peasantry and partially marketized agriculture it was, and had to be, anti-capitalist, though not necessarily or to the same extent anti-industrialist. On the other hand, the Agrarians were hardly anti-Western and readily adopted what they considered "progressive" from Western European theories and practices. They borrowed numerous ideas from Western authors—agrarian economists and sociologists, social reformers, revisionist socialists—and were especially zealous in applying the cooperative ideas. However, that transfer was anything but mechanistic. In the predominantly agrarian conditions in the Balkans, the Western agrarian and cooperative ideas acquired a different and more radical twist: not as "improvements," "cures" or "correctives" of

¹⁶² *Zemedelsko zname*, March 6, 1922. Cited in Stephane Groueff, *Crown of Thorns: The Reign of King Boris III, 1918–1943* (Lanham, NY, and London: Madison Books, 1987), 109.

¹⁶³ Richard Crampton, "Modernization: Conscious, Unconscious and Irrational," in *Industrialisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Südosteuropa*, ed. Ronald Schönfeld (Munich: Südosteuropa Gesellschaft, 1989), 125–134, esp. 128–129.

the ills of industrialization and capitalism (such as overproduction, under-employment or congested urbanization), as they were supposed to be in the “West,” but as a radical solution to the problems of backwardness, in some cases along an altogether different, primarily agrarian, road of development. In any case, the envisioned path was not a break with or displacement of previous socioeconomic conditions (like the Liberal and Socialist solutions) but primarily a continuation of them.

THE “RETURN TO THE NATIVE” (AUTOCHTHONISM)

The interwar era witnessed the growth of various intellectual currents that asserted and glorified the “native” and can therefore be categorized as autochthonism (nativism or indigenism), which, as it will be seen, in many ways radicalized and reformulated the previous traditionalist stances. They were accompanied by a strong rejection of foreign influences, particularly those from “Europe” (or the “West”). Although the roots of these currents can be traced to the prewar era and especially the fin-de-siècle cultural pessimism, their flourishing after the Great War was boosted by the disappointment with “Europe,” the “crisis of liberalism” and the ascendancy of authoritarian tendencies and of the new nationalism of the 1930s. Europe, sunk into chaos, now looked different—it lost its luster and attraction. And upstart European powers like Germany and Italy eclipsed the liberal West under the auspices of a new fascist order. All this heightened the attraction of latent authoritarian currents; it also created the spiritual atmosphere favoring self-assertive nationalist autochthonism. In contrast to previous critics, the autochthonists rejected not simply the blind imitation or flawed appropriation of things European, but the “West” itself, and called for a return to a re-valORIZED “authentic” native tradition and its perpetuation. Rebuffing European influences altogether, they were specifically concerned with safeguarding what they understood as national culture, variously called national “spirit” or spirituality, values, world view and way of life. But unlike the “third way” ideologies, which were largely development-oriented and drew on sociopolitical analyses, these mostly intellectual and aesthetic currents offered an escape into an imaginary (and imaginative) spiritual world. This shift in perception and focus was likened to a “veritable national dawn” and described in the following words by a Bulgarian author:

This interest towards what is our own is of paramount psychological significance for our national self-awareness; we are searching for, and already

discovering ourselves; we feel and become aware of our national "self" as something separate from the outside world, the world of the other peoples. Such is the significance of the present moment. From a cultural point of view, it means a transition from imitation to authentic creativity....¹⁶⁴

The autochthonist currents envisaged the re-evaluation of the "native" (or "popular"), that is, the native cultural tradition and national "essence," around various themes: the peasant and the village, the Orthodox religion, Slavdom (and its messianism), the "East," the pagan past or a combination of some of these (like peasant religiosity, the Slavic East, Slavic Orthodoxy or the pagan East). Hence there was a great diversity and richness of autochthonist projections.¹⁶⁵ What they had in common was the compensatory mechanism of "value reversion," whereby what was previously described as deficiencies in the political system or in economic development and technology was now claimed as a moral or cultural (or spiritual) advantage. The relationship between the native and the "West" was defined as a contrast between the "organic" and the "artificial"; the "spiritual" and the "rational" (or "mechanical"); "profound" (essences) and "superficial" (appearances); (warm) "emotion" and (cold) "reason"; the "human" and the "de-humanizing"; the small affective and supportive community and the wider (individualistic and indifferent) society, increasingly steeped in the metaphysical and the mystical.¹⁶⁶

Interwar Romanian thinkers endlessly hailed the peasants as the best part of the nation and favorably contrasted the rural world to the urban civilization of the "West." This was especially the case with the intellectuals around the influential interwar journal *Gândirea* (Thought), edited by Nichifor Crainic (1889–1972). For them (particularly for Crainic and Lucian Blaga) the peasants, and their worldview and values as expressed in folklore, mythology, magical beliefs, customs and peasant art, stood for

¹⁶⁴ Boris Trichkov, "Pred istinski natsionalen izgreve," *Zlatorog* 2, nos. 1–2 (1921), 55. According to Trichkov the enthusiasm for the native found expression in the interest toward national embroidery, the use of popular songs and melodies in music, of popular legends in painting, and creative lawmaking.

¹⁶⁵ Bulgarian examples along such lines are collected in *Zashto sme takiva? V tãrsene na bãlgarskata kulturna identichnost*, eds. Ivan Elenkov and Roumen Daskalov (Sofia: Svetlostruy, 1994). For a concise overview of Romanian autochthonism, see Hitchins, *Rumania*, 298–319. For an insightful treatment of Romanian "ethnic ontology," see Sorin Antohi, *Imaginaire culturel et rãalitã politique dans la Roumanie moderne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1999). The Serbian reactions to Europe are discussed in a revealing way by Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*.

¹⁶⁶ Roumen Daskalov, "Ideas about, and Reactions to Modernization in the Balkans," *East European Quarterly* 31, no. 2 (1997), 141–180, esp. 167.

the organic or human mode of existence, for spirituality, culture, virtues and human values. By contrast, cities (especially the major world cities) and the urban (bourgeois) way of life were rejected as inorganic, mechanized and mechanical, grossly materialistic, colorlessly international, and a sign of a decadent sickly civilization. In this dichotomy the Romanian essence (identity) was identified with the rural world, while Europe (and the West) represented the vilified and rejected urban cosmopolitan civilization.¹⁶⁷ One of the most authoritative political thinkers in interwar Yugoslavia, Slobodan Jovanović (1869–1958), in turn asserted that

The rural population is the best protection against the physical degeneration of the nation that causes the bad quality of conscripts and which, for this reason, is particularly dangerous. The rural population is also the protection against the one-sidedness and eccentricity of the industrial-urban culture, which mechanizes life and engenders that overly prosaic and calculating worldview called mercantile spirit.¹⁶⁸

One can likewise point to a series of Bulgarian authors who praised the peasant qualities and virtues in essays on national psychology (*Volkpsychologie*).¹⁶⁹ In the Bulgarian intellectual discourses, the undifferentiated notion of the “people” actually stood for the peasant, and they typically included a reproach (actually, self-reproach) of the Europeanized “intelligentsia” for having estranged itself from its (peasant) people as the embodiment of the national tradition and for having “rejected” the national culture and values in its fascination with the foreign.¹⁷⁰

The “native” essence was thought to reside, furthermore, in religion, especially in Eastern Orthodox Christianity, either in its higher “canonical” incarnation or (more often) as popular religiosity and thus closely connected with the rural world. This was the case with the “Orthodoxism” of Nichifor Crainic, and, in a different way, with the schemes of intellectuals such as Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga and Mircea Vulcănescu. Crainic was highly critical of contemporary Romanian culture, which he

¹⁶⁷ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 302–304, 309, 311–312.

¹⁶⁸ Cited in Slobodan Naumović, *Upotreba tradicije* (Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju/Filip Višnjić, 2009), 113.

¹⁶⁹ Konstantin Petkanov, “Harakterni cherti na bălgarina,” *Filosofski pregled* 2, no. 4 (1930), 352–367; Konstantin Petkanov, “Dushata na bălgarkata,” *Filosofski pregled* 5, no. 5 (1933), 385–393; Stoyan Yovev, “Selyachestvoto kato osnova na natsiyata,” *Filosofiya i sotsiologiya*, 1942, no. 2.

¹⁷⁰ Konstantin Petkanov, “Bălgarskata inteligentsiya kato rozhba i otritsanie na nasheto selo,” *Filosofski pregled* 4, no. 2 (1932), 124–135; Atanas Iliev, “Inteligentsiya i narod,” *Pros-veta* 7, nos. 8–10 (1942), 861–870.

accused of foreign emulation and of a lack of originality and spirituality. He placed his hopes for the regeneration of Romanian culture in a return to the spirituality of Eastern Christianity, particularly in its Byzantine form, seen as the highest form of Christianity, where the "authentic values" of the Romanian spirit were deemed to be located. By contrast, he regarded Catholicism as an inferior, formalistic variant of Christianity. In this he was influenced by the patristic tradition and by contemporary Russian religious philosophers (Vladimir Solovyov, Sergei Bulgakov, Nikolai Berdyaev). He believed that the Romanian peasants were profoundly religious and found evidence for that in the folklore, the laments (*bocete*) and Christmas carols (*colinde*) in particular. Crainic accused the generation of 1848 of having deviated from the Romanian cultural tradition and of embarking on thoughtless Westernization, which severed the elite from the peasantry as the source of national spirituality and undermined the organic spirit of the patriarchal village. He adopted from Oswald Spengler the dichotomy "culture/civilization" and like him considered "Western civilization," with its mega-cities, crude materialism and "colorless internationalism," to be decaying. In order to avoid the fate of the West, Romania had to cultivate the higher spiritual values of its own tradition, rooted in Eastern Christianity and the popular (folklore) culture.

For the Romanian philosopher Nae Ionescu (1888–1940) as well, Orthodox religion in Romania had permeated everyday life and acquired a specifically folk and ethnic character that found expression in Romanian folklore. This fusion between the Orthodox faith and the peasant psyche (or worldview) ultimately defined Romanian spirituality. His critique of Europe, which included clichés, such as the emptiness of scientism (positivism) and technology, and the anti-urban ("organic" village) trope, was built mainly on the denigration of Protestantism, which he blamed for the rationalization of religion, meaning the urge to explain the decisions of God in the categories of human logic, and consequently for fostering individualism. Ionescu's disciples of the younger generation formed the intellectual circle Criterion and were to acquire international fame in later years, especially Mircea Eliade (historian of religions), Emil Cioran (existentialist philosopher) and Mircea Vulcănescu (philosopher and sociologist). They also believed in the "new spirituality" and saw themselves as its missionaries, and Vulcănescu in particular considered the village as the locus of the Romanian "soul." Yet for them the new spirituality had other sources, especially Eastern mysticism (Buddhism, Hinduism), Orphism, theosophy, archaic religions, and even Protestant mysticism (Cioran), even if they acknowledged the historical role of Orthodoxy for Romanian

spirituality. Their intellectual sources included Swedenborg, Kierkegaard, Shestov, Berdyaev, Heidegger and Unamuno.¹⁷¹

An evocative Serbian illustration of placing Orthodoxy at the heart of the Serbian identity is provided by the eminent professor of theology, ardent preacher of Christianity and bishop of the Serbian Church Nikolaj Velimirović (1881–1956). He started as an admirer of the European Christian civilization (above and beyond the individual Christian denominations) and an anti-modernist crusader for the re-Christianization of Europe. But as his disappointment with Europe grew, he turned into a bitter critic of it and an advocate of the Greek Orthodox faith. Europe's malaise and its decline, Velimirović argued some years before World War II, were caused by its abandonment of the Christian faith. The Serbs were saved from surrender and slavery to the West thanks to "the Orthodox Church with its peasant folk," who kept calling for self-defense from "the rotten West." The Serbs, he said, should not try to put Europe back on the path of God, because "Serbia is Europe's neighbor, but it is not Europe" anymore. The only way they could escape Europe's ultimate fate was by separating themselves from it and standing by the Orthodox Jesus.¹⁷² Another Serbian theologian and a professor at the Orthodox Theological Faculty of Belgrade University, Justin Popović (1894–1979), espoused an anti-European stance from a strictly religious hostility to Western humanism (where man is "the measure of all things") and Western rationalism with a concept of an ontological conflict between East and West. As he put it, under the luster of the West there rumbled "volcanic controversies," while under the rough surface of the East "there murmurs the God-yearning stream of spirituality." Moving towards the European man turned one into a "fleeting moth"; moving towards the *svetosavski Bogočovek* [a Serbian mystical teaching] makes one "an immortal creator, a creator of the Orthodox culture."¹⁷³ The European Christ was "despotic," since he united people through "blood and sword," added the Serbian classicist and

¹⁷¹ Keith Hitchins, "Gândirea: Nationalism in a Spiritual Guise," in *Social Change in Romania*, 140–173; Keith Hitchins, "Orthodoxism: Polemics over Ethnicity and Religion in Interwar Romania," in Banac and Verdery, eds., *National Character and National Ideology*, 135–156; Hitchins, *Romania*, 299–305, 314–319.

¹⁷² Nikolaj Velimirović, "Iznad Istoka i Zapada," in Nikolaj Velimirović, *Sabrana dela*, vol. 5 (Düsseldorf: Himmelsthür, 1977), cited in Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 161–167. Later Velimirović blamed the Serbs (Yugoslavs) for turning away from God, too.

¹⁷³ Jeromonah Justin, "Između dvaju kultura: evropske-čovečanske i svetosavske-Bogočovečanske," *Narodna odbrana* 46 (November 11, 1928), 747, cited in Branka Prpa-Jovanović, "Između Istoka i Zapada. Kulturni identitet i kulturno civilizacijska uporišta," *Tokovi istorije* 3–4 (1997), 7–28 (12–13).

philosopher Miloš Djurić; the Slavic Christ (as construed by Dostoyevsky) was untainted: "Against the West there should glitter our Christ, whom we had preserved and whom they did not even know."¹⁷⁴ Examples of constructing the national traditions on the basis of Orthodoxy are more difficult to find among Bulgarian authors, who gave precedence to alternative forms of religiosity, such as paganism and various "Gnostic" or heretic ("proto-Reformist") doctrines like Bogomilism.¹⁷⁵

The native was sometimes extended to broader ("racial," but also geocultural) categories. The hopes for a bright Slavic future prophesized by some conservative Western thinkers (such as Spengler, Hermann Keyserling and Arthur Möller van den Bruck) seemed fulfilled by the independence of many Slav peoples (Poles, Czechs and Slovaks, Croats, Slovenes) after World War I. In Serbia the construction of Slavdom as the cultural opposite to (Germanic and Romanic) Europe was particularly fashionable among the young intellectual group of Expressionists (and philosophical Bergsonians). Joined by Nikolaj Velimirović and his followers, they entwined the Slavic idea with infatuation with India—imagined as spiritual, intuitive and religious—and posited it as an antidote to the rational, soulless and atheist West. This utopian "Easternism" had various sources: Dostoyevsky's Russian messianism, Eurasianism, but also the cultural critique of European modernism in the first decades of the twentieth century, Spengler's philosophy of culture, Henri Bergson's critique of scientific rationalism and "intellectualism" and (especially with Djurić) some influence from Rabindranath Tagore's "spiritualist" critique of modernity. The depiction of the East as a cultural counterpoint of Europe and the idea of Slavic messianism were closely linked with Oswald Spengler's prophecy of a civilizational collapse of Europe, seen as the degradation of morality and the dissolution of the erstwhile cultural foundations of civil society. This found resonance with autochthonist anti-Western inclinations in the Balkans connected with resistance to imitation and fears of loss of identity, resentment of Western superiority in the technological, economic, military and scientific spheres, critiques of Western imperialism, resistance to Eurocentrism and the devaluation of the local—which led

¹⁷⁴ Miloš Đurić, *Pred slovenskim vidicima. Prilozi filozofiji slovenske kulture* (Belgrade, 1928), 41–43, cited in Prpa-Jovanović, "Između Istoka i Zapada," 13–14.

¹⁷⁵ On the different "ideas about religion" and their relation to nationalism in interwar Bulgaria, see Nina Dimitrova, *Religiya i natsionalizām* (Sofia: Faber, 2006).

to a certain relativization of the European model of modernity.¹⁷⁶ Wrote Miloš Milošević in 1923:

Slavic psychology and Slavic thought are deeply penetrated by messianism, by the mystic belief that the Slavs are the “newly chosen people of God” who have a special mission to fulfill in the life of humankind. They are a “God-bearing” people [*bogonosac*] carrying in their pure womb the new testament of the Spirit to be yielded when the time comes. At the boundary of East and West, the Slavic world had been splashed by waves from all sides which deposited in it both sand and pearls. The Slavs adopted and preserved deep in themselves all that was precious. And they hope that one day, enriched by all that, they will step onto the stage of world history.¹⁷⁷

Slavdom was praised by the right-wing Bulgarian philosopher Yanko Yanev (1900–1945) for its alleged “closeness to life” and “sense for the mystic and the sacred” and because it contained “a child-like innocent principle, life-giving force, primordially and inspiration,” in contrast to the rationality, formalism, technicism and bureaucratism of Europe.¹⁷⁸ Another Bulgarian author—Nayden Sheytanov (1890–1970)—linked the fortunes of the Bulgarian culture to the expected upsurge of Slavdom, seen as uniting “the old magic South and East” and the new world of Europe. Characteristically, the Slavs were represented by him as basically peasant peoples with a folk culture, who had suffered for centuries under town-based foreign rule until their revival in the nineteenth century and their subsequent liberation. This, however, put them on a new political course with different goals that threatened their unity.¹⁷⁹

Some Slavic messianists did not seek to substitute Slavic spirituality for European culture but aspired to combine the two worlds “in an organic way.” Miloš Djurić made use of the usual metaphor of the Balkans as a “crossroads” between East and West, where the East stood for “soul” or “ethics” (or spirituality and meaning) while the West represented “reason” or “technique” (meaning science, technology and material achievements). Djurić saw it as the mission of the Slavs and of the Serbs, Croats and

¹⁷⁶ Miloš Djurić, *Filozofija panhumanizma* (Belgrade, 1922); Miloš Djurić, *Pred slovenskim vidicima* (Belgrade, 1928); Nikolaj Velimirović, *Reči o svečoveku* (Belgrade, 1920). Also Vladimir Vujić and Prvoš Slankamenac, *Novi humanizam* (Belgrade, 1923). About them, see Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 25–26, 88–98.

¹⁷⁷ Miloš Milošević, “Pad Zapada i sveslovenski mesijanizam—Prilog problemu naše kulturne orijentacije,” *Raskrsnica*, June 3, 1923, 30, cited in Prpa-Jovanović, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, 18.

¹⁷⁸ Yanko Yanev, “Probuzhdane,” *Zlatorog* 11, nos. 5–6 (1930), 273–283.

¹⁷⁹ Nayden Sheytanov, “Sădbata na slavyanstvoto,” *Zlatorog* 11, no. 2 (1930), 95–107.

Slovenes in particular to mediate and produce a higher cultural synthesis, which he called "panhumanism."

We, the Slavs, who are neither East nor West but live between the East and the West, have the mission to merge, in a high cultural synthesis, these two kinds of life: the life of the East in space and the life of the West in time; to knit together the Western practice and rumbling with the Eastern splendid listening and peace. To yield a vivid culture, a rich syntagma, in which, in an organic way, are joined the eternal contents of Eastern and Western cultures. To raise alongside the Tree of Knowledge the Tree of Life.¹⁸⁰

A leading Bulgarian public intellectual of the time, Boris Yotsov (1894–1945), sought a solution to the dualism between the Slavic and the European in Bulgarian culture in the same direction.¹⁸¹

Consistent autochthonism, however, meant not bridging the East and the West, but rejecting the West. Vladimir Vujić (1894–1953) was a convinced Spenglerian who shared the notion of a dichotomy between culture and civilization. He saw Europe as a declining civilization and Serbia as a young nation just embarking upon its creative cultural phase. Consequently, he maintained that Serbia should not follow Europe but concentrate on producing a new and vital culture of its own. "No, we are not Europe," he wrote, "and it is just as well."¹⁸² He went a long way in deconstructing the East-West dichotomy, which was still tacitly assumed by the clichéd bridge metaphor. What the Yugoslavs had to do was not to engage in the futile debate over whether they belonged to the East, to the West or somewhere in between, but to become aware of, and develop, their own authentic culture by studying their past and peculiar worldview, their place in the world and notions of life. According to Vujić these were to be found in the folkloric heritage of the South Slavs, particularly in oral poetry.

Countering the attempts of some "dissident" currents to assert the originality of the Bulgarian national culture in a synthesis with European culture, Nayden Sheytanov argued: "Europeanizing largely means cultural slavery, which will continue even if we succeed in creating our proper form of European culture . . . The Balkans and Bulgaria did not exist this

¹⁸⁰ Miloš Đurić, *Pred slovenskim vidicima*, 64, cited in Prpa-Jovanović, *Između Istoka i Zapada*, 14–15; Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 87–90.

¹⁸¹ Boris Yotsov, "Bălgariya i slavyanstvoto," *Slavyanski glas*, 1937–1940, no. 1; *Slavyanstvoto i Evropa* (Sofia, Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 1992 [posthumously]).

¹⁸² Cited in Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 108 (from Vladimir Vujić, *Sputana i oslobođena misao* (Belgrade: Algoritam, 2006), 194.

long only to dress up the foreign substance in a new form.”¹⁸³ In his writings of the late 1930s, the aforementioned Yanko Yanev rejected the Slavic idea he had entertained earlier and embarked on a consistently autochthonist course. The Bulgarian spirit belonged to neither the East nor the West and did not harmonize with either the mystic or the rational. Bulgarians were bound to follow their own self-reliant path, which had nothing to do with either the mysticism of the Slavs or the intellectual mechanism of the Western man. Slavdom was an “abstraction,” and Russia was being industrialized and Americanized, so that little remained of the mystery and profundity of its soul. Salvation was even less to be expected from the “tired” Western nations and the decadent (and degenerating) European civilization than from the “tractorized” East. There was only one way—“the path toward ourselves.” But what was it? It had to be in harmony with the Bulgarian spirit and Bulgarian “racial self-awareness.” Yanev defined the Bulgarian spirit as pagan and the Bulgarian people as primeval, virgin and spontaneous, just entering their “heroic epopee.” The term “barbarian” also appeared in a positive sense, associated with heroic deeds and self-sacrifice.¹⁸⁴ Later on Yanev would gravitate toward Nazism.

Autochthonism associated with modernist and anti-traditionalist currents as well. For the modernists and avant-gardists of the 1920s, such as the literary *Zenit* circle in Serbia or the *Sagittarius* circle in Bulgaria, the anti-hegemonist critique of Europe was only the stepping-stone towards asserting a new type of man, a new notion of universal culture, and a new place for the small nations and peripheral cultures in this new universe. To quote Ljubomir Micić (1895–1971), editor of the Yugoslav avant-garde literary journal *Zenit*:

The beginning of the great [twentieth] century is marked by the fiercest combat between the East and the West: A DUEL OF CULTURES. The Zenitists' position is against Western civilization. The idea of the East is wide. It has the largest and widest part of the sky. Under this *Eastern* sky we, unfortunately, feel proud that in our yellow fields germinate the alien *Western* culture of which we are faithful and blind guardians. . . . Are we to be just guards defending the West? Are we still to remain servants for a long time, defending Lloyd George, Briand, Focha or D'Annunzio? *No! Latins out!* It is time for heroism! Therefore: *we can only be pioneers and participants in*

¹⁸³ Nayden Sheytanov, “Otziv za: K.Gäläbov. Zovät na rodinata,” *Literaturen glas*, 1932, no. 147, cited in Dimitrova, *Religiya i natsionalizäm*, 126.

¹⁸⁴ Yanko Yanev, “Iztok ili Zapad,” *Zlatorog* 14, no. 4 (1933), 174–180.

*the creation of a universal culture which the EASTERN Man of the Urals, the Caucasus and the Balkans brings with him...*¹⁸⁵

Micić went further along this line with his defiant image of the "Barbaro-genius" that initially encompassed all Slavs and later included only the Serbs. Overturning the original image, the barbarians appeared here as positive actors, free of the burdens of civilization and full of vitality, strength and self-confidence, who would rejuvenate exhausted Europe and even save it from itself by "Balkanizing" it. While this re-signification of the "barbarians" was a broader European avant-garde phenomenon, Micić also drew inspiration from an indigenous Balkan source—the "primitive" Dinaric type described by the Serbian anthropo-geographer Jovan Cvijić and praised by the German folk psychologist Gerhard Gesemann. The Croat philosopher Vladimir Dvorniković hurled the image of the barbarian back at Europe itself (as the "civilized Viking"). He exposed its hypocrisy in projecting itself as benign, bringing happiness to the world, while in fact brutally colonizing it.

The Slav spirit never completely sunk into the European one, and it fortunately does not recognize as its own all that which in reality is specifically European: for example the bloodthirsty and sadistic Inquisition, which is unknown even in the deepest Orient; or, closer to our time, that disgusting imperialist greed and brutal technical materialism concealed under the shiny surface of civilization. We Slavs can easily live without the pride of belonging to such a family.¹⁸⁶

The East-West dichotomy and the search for Slavic identity were not exclusive to *ressentiment* writers and philosophers alone but spilled into "scientific discourses" as well. Serbia's most outstanding geographer before World War II, the aforementioned Jovan Cvijić, subsumed the Balkan Slavs' "original way of self-expression in the organization of the state, in the mode and direction of their social and economic work, and especially in science and art" under the concept of "Slavic civilization," which he saw as "a new type" of civilization in the making. As he put it, it "will not be a copy of any of the existing types of European culture but will grow organically from the [Slavic] peoples' spirit and will be based on its most original and most fertile properties." Cvijić envisaged this "Slavic civilization"

¹⁸⁵ Ljubomir Micić, "Delo zenitizma," *Zenit* 8 (October 1921), 2, cited in Prpa-Jovanović, "Između Istoka i Zapada," 22 (italics and emphasis in the original).

¹⁸⁶ Cited in Milutinović, *Getting Over Europe*, 100.

as being “closer to truth, to pious life and to God than the present European civilization.”¹⁸⁷

A precursor of this interwar anti-Western autochthonism can be detected in the “Oriental ideal” (*Anatoliko Idaniko*) of Athanasios Souliotis-Nikolaidis and Ion Dragoumis in the decade before the Balkan Wars. This was the vision of a big Eastern supranational state consisting of the peoples of the Balkans and Asia Minor, eventually in a federative frame, with Constantinople as the capital. It had to be based on “Hellenism” (the Hellenic spirit and culture), which had to be adopted by all nations in the region as a common bond and a hallmark of civilization. Oriental civilization had been prepared by centuries of shared history, first in the Byzantine Empire and then in the Ottoman Empire, and would eventually produce the “Oriental man.” This vision was directed against the hegemony of Western Europe (the “Franks”) and its civilization, primarily against the imperialistic great powers, but was also meant to set the “Oriental ideal” apart from Asian civilizations. This idea has been interpreted as an “evolutionary” variant of the Greek Megali (Great) Idea, which tried to rescue the ecumenical cultural claim of Greekdom.¹⁸⁸

Going further back into history, the native was sometimes constructed as pagan. In the Bulgarian case, this could be the Thracians or the Bulgars (a Turkic tribe), while in the Romanian case it was the Dacians (Thracian tribes). Thus in search of “Bulgarianism” (and an inspiring Great Bulgarian ideology), Nayden Sheytanov created his rather bizarre and idiosyncratic variant of Thracianism. According to him Bulgarian paganism was closely connected with the Thracian religious cults, especially those of Dionysus (identified with the Thracian deity Sabazius) and with Orphism as a cult and mysteries of the Thracian musician Orpheus (and some Eastern cults during the Roman domination, like Mithraism). Sheytanov was obsessed with revealing remnants and manifestations of these deities and cults in various names, popular beliefs and customs and in Bulgarian folklore. According to him, even after Christianization the Bulgarians remained pagan at heart, and the Thracian (and other pagan) beliefs persisted in

¹⁸⁷ Jovan Cvijić, “Osnovi jugoslovenske civilizacije,” *Nova Evropa* 6, no. 7 (November 1, 1922), 212–213, cited in Prpa-Jovanović, “Između Istoka i Zapada,” 20.

¹⁸⁸ Ioannis Zelepos, *Die Ethnisierung griechischer Gesellschaft, 1870–1912: Staat und private Akteure vor dem Hintergrund der ‘Megali Idea’* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2002, *Südosteuropäische Arbeiten*, 113), 207–235. For a somewhat different interpretation, see A.J. Panayotopoulos, “The ‘Great Idea’ and the Vision of Eastern Federation: A Propos of the Views of I. Dragoumis and A. Souliotis-Nikolaidis,” *Balkan Studies* 21, no. 2 (1980), 331–365.

the form of various practices and heresies like Bogomilism; Christianity itself became transformed and "Bulgarianized."¹⁸⁹

A peculiar Bulgarian brand of autochthonism drew inspiration from the Bulgars, founders of the first Bulgarian state in the seventh century, and their "Hunic" principle of organization in hordes, consisting of clans, led by a strong ruling clan. It was elaborated by Dimităr Săsălov into a specifically Bulgarian "historical path" and Bulgarian exceptionality (which they shared with Japan). The principle of strong leadership was, at the same time, meant to buttress the authority of the king, and the clan principle was intended to improve the selection of political elites.¹⁹⁰

Dacianism was at the heart of Romanian autochthonism as it moved the Romanian origins to (pre-Roman) Dacia, while the supposedly Roman (Latin) origins and identity performed the opposite function, that of a link to an external center—Rome, the "West." Even if linguistically Latin, the Romanians are—so this theory goes—biologically and spiritually Dacians, not Romans or even Daco-Romans.¹⁹¹ The Romanian poet, playwright and essayist Lucian Blaga (1895–1961) epitomized this "Dacianist autochthonism," staging what he defined as a "revolt of the autochthonous layer." Like Mircea Eliade, who hailed the thirst for the "originary" and the local in Romanian spirituality,¹⁹² Blaga was fascinated by the vitality and the cosmic vision of the Thracian world, which he depicted in his "pagan drama" *Zalmoxe* (1921). Behind the "mask" of Orthodoxy, the Romanians, according to him, had preserved their pagan beliefs and customs and a way of experiencing and understanding reality inherited from the pagan Dacian times. The Latin traits of rationality and balance, a sense of symmetry and harmony also to be found in the Romanian national character, were superimposed on the living Dacian-Slav heritage, which erupted every now and then from the depths of the Romanian soul.¹⁹²

The search for authentic Greekness (*ellinikotita*) and its roots, which was going on since the Greek Enlightenment, continued throughout the interwar period. By that time the Byzantine Empire was well integrated in the Greek national narrative due to the efforts of historians and ethnologists, but the tension between the "Romaic" national self-image (echoing Byzantine history, the Orthodox Christian tradition and the spoken

¹⁸⁹ Nayden Sheytanov, *Velikobălgarski svetogled* (Sofia, 1940), esp. 130–196.

¹⁹⁰ Dimităr Săsălov, *Pătvyat na Bălgariya* (Sofia, 1936); Dimităr Săsălov, *Za bălgarskata konstitutsiya* (Sofia, 1937).

¹⁹¹ Boia, *History and Myth*, 99.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 99–100; Hitchins, *Rumania*, 307, 311.

language—*dimotiki*) and the “Hellenic” image (referring to everything classical and the archaic language—*katharevousa*) persisted. Moreover, the Hellenic model was outward-looking and attuned to international expectations, while the Romaic model was inward-looking and self-critical. The former implied an inclusive view of Europe and the claim to have contributed greatly to its civilization, while the latter tended to exclude Europe.¹⁹³ With his book *Free Spirit* (*Elefthero Pneuma*, 1929), the intellectual and writer Georgios Theotokas (1906–1966), who spent his youth in Istanbul, set the stage for the intellectual debate over the national culture. He subscribed to the cause of the demoticist movement and championed a kind of Hellenism not confined within state boundaries, but broader; not immutable, but living and creative; not immune from outside influences, but thriving on them. He hoped that Hellenism could contribute to European culture in the form of “neo-humanism” in modern Greek art and thought based on “national consciousness.” The poet Giorgos (or George) Seferis (1900–1971), a Greek from Asia Minor, was another promoter of a broader cultural Hellenism beyond the political boundaries of the Greek state and one that would accommodate diversity and foster creativity. With the establishment of General Mataxas’s authoritarian “Fourth of August” regime (1936–1941) in Greece, a “third Greek civilization” was proclaimed that was supposedly to be greater than classical Greece and Christian Byzantium.¹⁹⁴

At the same time a more moderate view on the issue of foreign influences emerged within the prevailing national (cultural) authenticity current, which tried to balance between and mediate the extremes. It argued both against self-isolation within the native and elimination of foreign cultural influence, and against wholesale, uncritical reception of these influences. As some Bulgarian authors put it, interaction with foreign cultures was legitimate if what was acquired was subjected to creative refraction through the native point of view. The “native,” in turn, might be expressed through modern means and techniques. “Authenticity” (*samobitnost*) did not consist of descriptions of the people’s way of life or stylization of the folkloric heritage. It consisted of the artist’s immersion in the depths of

¹⁹³ Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece* (New York: Pella, 1986), 18–21.

¹⁹⁴ Gerasimos Augustinos, “Hellenism and the Modern Greeks,” in *Eastern European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Peter Sugar (Washington, DC: American University Press, 1995), 164–204, esp. 177–184; Martha Klironomos, “George Theotokas’ Free Spirit: Reconfiguring Greece’s Path toward Modernity?” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 18, no. 1 (1992), 79–97.

the people's soul and "seeing" with the eyes of a Bulgarian. A culture in a national spirit was thus a question of "style."¹⁹⁵

A developed concept of an ethnic or national "style" comes from the aforementioned Romanian poet and philosopher Lucian Blaga, who was close to *Gândirea* but in a rather unconventional way. His theory of style was influenced by psychoanalysis, especially by Karl Jung's ideas of the "collective unconscious," and by German exponents of the "morphology of culture," such as the ethnologist Leo Frobenius and Oswald Spengler. Style, in his definition, was the sum of categories that characterized and differentiated historical periods, works of art, and—most importantly—ethnic communities. There were many such categories, some primary, others secondary, which, grouped together, formed what he called a "stylistic matrix." Examples of primary stylistic categories were spatial and temporal "horizons," axiological "accents," "attitudes" of advance or withdrawal and aspirations to form and order. The stylistic matrix was rooted in the unconscious categories of the mind and, as the collective unconscious of the ethnic group, it shaped the experience of the world and was the source of the originality of cultures. Blaga applied his theory of style to the Romanian case in his work *Spațiul mioritic* (Mioritic Space, 1936). In it he described the spatial horizon and spiritual substratum of Romanian culture as the "infinitely undulating horizon" of hill and valley of Transylvanian landscape that found expression in various forms, from popular ballads to the arrangement of houses in the villages. Precisely because he believed that the stylistic matrix assured the national character of literature and art (and even of philosophical and scientific theories), he was not disturbed by cultural imports from abroad, and he himself used modernist means of expression. A poem or a work of art was Romanian in its very method of interpreting reality and in its internal rhythm; ethnicity was destiny because of the shaping categories of the stylistic matrix.¹⁹⁶

In a similar vein of mediation, the Serbian intellectual Rastko Petrović proposed that the local could acquire universal significance if expressed in European terms. In this way local cultures could take their own (however modest) place alongside others while retaining their specificity and

¹⁹⁵ Atanas Iliev, "Narodnostno obosobyavane na bălgarskata kultura," *Bălgarska misāl*, 11, no. 1 (1936), 3–12; Atanas Iliev, "Narodnost i kultura," *Bălgarska misāl* 10, nos. 7–8 (1935), 440–453; Atanas Iliev, "Dinamichno i statichno shvashtane na rodnata kultura," *Otets Paisiy* 11 (1938), 321–324; Konstantin Petkanov, "Bălgarskata kultura i chuzhdentsite," *Izkustvo i kritika*, 1938, no. 4, 181–185.

¹⁹⁶ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 307–309, 313. Blaga developed his concept of style and the stylistic matrix most comprehensively in his *Orizont și stil* (Horizon and Style), 1935.

difference: "Until we get over Europe and learn to speak European, we will not succeed in discovering anything of value in ourselves, let alone express it in such a manner that it will have some value for the rest of the world."¹⁹⁷ In the Bulgarian intellectual and literary context, the idea of mediation and reconciliation of the native and the foreign, the East and the West, inspired the literary circle known as Sagittarius, which published the newspaper *Iztok* (East) from 1925 to 1927, followed by the short-lived *Strelets* (Sagittarius) in 1927. The programmatic statement of the group's leader, the literary critic Konstantin Gălăbov, reads: "We are in favor of a native literature that partakes in the values of the West and is created under Western influence."¹⁹⁸ This was a pro-European literary current (including major intellectual figures such as Chavdar Mutafov and Atanas Iliev), which sought to stimulate engagement with the "native" not in a superficial "ethnographic" sense, but in communication with European aesthetic currents.

Greek intellectuals of the interwar period, especially the demoticists (the advocates for the use of the spoken language instead of the archaic official language) also wrestled with the problem of how to reconcile "European" modernism in Greek literature with the quest for what was authentically popular and archetypically Greek.¹⁹⁹ This was especially the case with what was known as the "generation of the 1930s" (such as the aforementioned Georgios Theotokas, Giorgos Seferis, 1900–1971, and Odysseas Elytis, 1911–1996), who tried to avoid the copying of "Western" currents yet without relapsing into the narrow-minded nationalism and cultural provincialism that they criticized. They declared what was authentically Greek to be encoded in the "popular traditions" or expressed by autodidact authors (such as Yannis Makriyannis, the semi-literate captain who participated in the 1821–1828 Greek Revolution, or the naïve painter Theofilos), and sometimes in the particular Greek landscape, climate and light. They longed for a new spiritual (*pnevmatikos*) Hellenism through

¹⁹⁷ Rastko Petrović, *Eseji i članci* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1974), 19; cited in Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 25.

¹⁹⁸ Konstantin Gălăbov, "Kăm mladezhita," at http://www.litclub.com/library/kritika/gulubov/kum_ml.htm (accessed November 3, 2011). Originally published in *Iztok*, no. 38, October 1, 1926. On the Sagittarius circle, see Sava Vasilev, "Mezhdū 'Svoeto i svoeto.' Zodiakăt na 'Streltsite,'" <http://liternet.bg/publish/savavasilev/zodiakyt.htm> (accessed November 3, 2011).

¹⁹⁹ On this, see Dimitris Tziouvas, *Oi metamorphoseis tou ethnismou kai to ideologima tis ellinikotitas sto mesopolemo* (Athens: Odysseas, 2006, 2nd ed.); Augustinos, "Hellenism and the Modern Greeks," esp. 177–184.

which Greece would redefine its place in Europe and enrich its culture. Yet even the authors most open to cultural communication with Europe (such as the writers Spyros Melas [1882–1966] and Georgios Theotokas) sometimes became caught up in ethnocentric visions.²⁰⁰

Finally, in countries like Bulgaria and Romania, which sided with the Axis powers in the early 1940s, certain intellectual and political groups turned their anti-Europeanism into a call for a "New Europe" under Nazi leadership. In contrast with conventional European values such as democracy and liberalism, they asserted new values, a new order and a new European solidarity on its basis. Yanko Yanev wrote in 1942:

We are at the beginning of a new era not only of history but of all European culture, which is beginning to gain new features. In place of the conflicts of interest between the numerous countries arose the idea of a harmonious synthesis of the objectivity of each of them, so that in the individuals' consciences a truly European feeling really began to emerge.²⁰¹

Even autochthonist paths, as we can see, owed much to interaction with the "West." Paramount in this case were the anti-rationalist, intuitionist, relativistic and existential currents associated with, among others, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud (and Karl Jung), Ludwig Klages (as regards the opposition between soul and mind), Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger's ontology, Henri Bergson's "élan vital," the existential and mystic ideas of Kierkegaard and especially Oswald Spengler's critique of Western civilization and the prediction of its decline. But there were also connections to "Eastern" ideas and currents—Russian (Nikolai Berdyaev, Vladimir Solovyov, Nikolai Danilevski), Eurasian and Eastern mystical religions and philosophies. Thus, through various intellectual channels and transfers, including Russian intellectual currents, Western sources and ideas came to frame and inform the critique of "the West" in the Balkans. There is a certain irony in that often these ideas were used to validate a peculiar national identity ("character," "spirituality") in opposition to "Europe" and "the West."

²⁰⁰ Tziouvas, *Oi metamorphoseis*, 79, 101, 154–155.

²⁰¹ Yanko Yanev, "Nachaloto na edna nova epoha," *Mlada Evropa*, 1942, no. 8, 19, cited in Dimitrova, *Religiya i natsionalizăm*, 129.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, we hope to have conveyed, if not fully exhausted, the range of diversity and ambiguities in the reactions to European influence and imports in the Balkans, and in the attitude towards “Europe” in general as the epitome of modernity. In the positive spectrum, admiration for “cultural Europe” coexisted with apprehensions and fears from “political Europe” and the threat of colonial subordination even without political domination. In the critical one, “European culture” itself and interaction with the “West” were seen as a danger to national authenticity while, at the same time, falling back on “European” anti-Westernist models. Technological imports, from fashions to locomotives, elicited different responses, but their massive influx could not be stopped, as it both spurred and was reinforced by changes in tastes, aspirations and expectations. Borrowed institutional arrangements, regulative systems and ideologies in the newly established Balkan states often sat uneasily with the local sociocultural traditions, values and practices; in the course of their domestication and naturalization they mutated, often in unpredictable ways. Those who supported the induced changes defined the results as “adaptation,” “compromise” or “modification.” Those who opposed the changes called the results “distortion,” “simulation,” “travesty” or “caricature.” Generally the critical mood prevailed and intensified with time, particularly starting at the beginning of the twentieth century. Until after World War I the critiques were targeted mainly at the speed and manner of borrowing (considered rash, premature and unsuitable) and at the outcome of the transfer (imitative, malfunctioning and open to misuse) rather than against the “models” as such. In the interwar period the “West” itself lost much of its lure as a standard and was largely replaced by alternative, albeit rarely non-Western, “models.”

It seems easy—and methodologically reasonable—from a present-day point of view to relativize our protagonists’ “inferiority complex,” fueled as it was by the perception of “lack” and “lag” vis-à-vis Europe, by either postulating the coexistence of many, mutually neutralizing “Europes”—a strategy adopted by some Balkan intellectuals in the past, perhaps most memorably by belles-lettres writers like Ivo Andrić²⁰²—or insisting on the notion of relative synchronicity between the “West” and the “non-West”

²⁰² Milutinović, *Getting over Europe*, 225–260.

within the *longue durée* of modernity.²⁰³ In the foregoing inquiry we have deliberately abstained from evaluating the positions articulated at the time from an *ex post* epistemological viewpoint, from assessing which position had better chances of resolving the dilemmas at hand, or even from gauging the extent to which discrete diagnoses truthfully reflected the reality. Focusing on the reconstruction of the actual attitudes, reactions and choices of those who engaged in those debates, our approach has privileged the exegetic (hermeneutic) approach that consists in contextualizing value judgments over critical analysis from a present-day point of view. This choice rests on a methodological contention, namely that even when misrepresenting (or misunderstanding) reality or misjudging the intended effect of their choices, our protagonists' attitudes to "Europe" did not remain in the realm of discourse alone. These attitudes acquired structural characteristics with a *longue durée* effect: they generated and triggered the implementation of specific strategies for change and paths of development; they propelled catching-up transformations or, conversely, turned to the "native" as a rationale for upholding an autarchic course; and they served as a means of social mobilization. Moreover, these same attitudes, as we have seen, underscore the dialogical and relational nature of identity-building: binary self-projections such as "we" and "Europe," local tradition and foreign import, authenticity and imitation, backwardness and civilization contributed to shaping the "identity languages" in the region and set the framework for the perennial battles over the representation of the nation.

Put differently, the contemporaries' recognition of asymmetry and asynchronicity between the "West" and the Balkans, which resulted in substantial borrowing of "Western forms," did not imply lack of local agency. As we have seen, the ideologies, developmental programs and social theories that the Balkan intellectuals and politicians elaborated when confronted with these challenges were not merely imitative and derivative, "transplants" or "copies." They were intellectually "European" and, at the same time, "Balkan," as well as "Serbian," "Bulgarian," "Romanian" and "Greek." What our inquiry has highlighted is the considerable regional convergence between the challenges of modernity encountered, the responses they elicited, and the solutions put forth for coping with them. Considering other "peripheral" areas, this convergence can hardly be said to have

²⁰³ For an argument along these lines concerning the "temporality" of Eastern European nationalism, see Todorova, "The Trap of Backwardness," 140–164.

produced a specific “Balkan pattern.” Nevertheless, it underscores the utility of approaching the modern history of the Balkans as a web of similar transformations, mutual connections and synchronicities. The fact that, more often than not, regional entanglements proceeded with “Western” mediation, may prompt us to expand the field of actual interaction under study but not cancel the value of studying these countries in a common frame.

Contemporary protagonists and later analysts have tended to subsume the diverse viewpoints in the debates under examination here into two monolithic counter-positions, variously defined as modernists vs. traditionalists, Westernizers vs. autochthonists, pro-Europeanists vs. nationalists. Over time, and often teleologically, such broad ideological counter-positions became overlaid by artificially polarized political divisions between progressivists, liberals and forward-looking leftists on the one hand, and reactionaries, conservatives and traditionalist rightists on the other. However, as our survey sought to demonstrate, against the backdrop of the complexity of the transfers at stake and the impact of numerous changing circumstances—social, (geo-)political, ideological and intellectual—the actual positions can hardly be categorized in such neat oppositions.²⁰⁴

Instead, it would be far more appropriate to think of the debates at issue as a continuum of positions, where the extreme cases of wholesale uncritical emulation or complete cultural autarchy were the exception and remained marginal. Thus, anti-modern, anti-European, and anti-capitalist attitudes did not always come together, just as a pro-modernist stance did not necessarily imply praising everything European. The same response could contain different evaluations of modernity, Europe and capitalism (and industrialism), for example, being pro-modern but anti-European or ambivalent about capitalism—always with reference to particular phenomena or arrangements.

²⁰⁴ The same is true of historiographical debates. As Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi argued concerning post-1989 Romanian historiography and its “reformist” and traditional schools (debating Romanian culture and national identity), the sharp contrast between protochronists and anti-protochronists that resurrects the older binaries of autochthonists and Westernizers, traditionalists and modernists, results in reductionism from the opposite perspective. A continuum of combinations is a more appropriate analytical framework. Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi, “In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990–2000,” *East European Politics and Societies*, 17, no. 3 (2003), 415–453.

In a kind of shared and connected or entangled history, the adverse reactions often drew on Western critiques of "the West," in which one current of thought could be played off against another: for instance, (German) Romanticism against (French) Enlightenment, the "conservative revolution" against modernism, and fin-de-siècle cultural pessimism and "spirituality" against earlier philosophical materialism and scientific positivism. Yet these were also reconfigured and "naturalized" by the local milieu and turned to other referents and other purposes. Thus "tradition," local "custom," and the national "genius" were often evoked and used strategically to help "digest" the novelties and justify them. As long as Europe stood, explicitly or implicitly, as the (universal) standard of modernity, responses to the imports and adaptations of things "European" could be critical, but this very dissent or opposition was also tied to the standard. This standard would only be dismantled later, by the more radical critique and de-centering of the Eurocentric model in the post-World War II global realities and the end of European hegemony in particular. The postwar global confrontation between two socioeconomic systems and military blocs, and especially the dissolution of the colonial system, created new constellations that required new paradigms. One of the results was that modernization was decoupled from Europeanization and the emergence of new notions of modernity; this gave more scope to appreciate different modes of modernization and different historical trajectories of modernity—or just difference.

BALKAN LIBERALISMS: HISTORICAL ROUTES OF A MODERN IDEOLOGY

Diana Mishkova

INTRODUCTION

In the Balkans, as in other places in Europe, liberalism is inextricably linked with the construction of modernity. Liberal ideas and movements triggered the emergence of the first concepts of modern rule and the first modern institutions in the region. Under their banner the struggles for national unification and independence were waged and a concept of legitimate government different from the traditional one was introduced: a representative government, as opposed to an autocratic or a bureaucratic one, enacted by the liberals themselves on behalf of the sovereign nation. Liberalism presents a case of ideational and institutional transfer that changed the nature of politics: its premises and institutionalization meant not just new technical rules or organizational forms but a new form of politics. The liberal parties constituted the first modern political parties in the Balkans with a distinct conception about the arrangement of society based not simply on experience but on knowledge and visions of the future as well. And yet liberalism's historical role with respect to Balkan political modernity, its local theoretical and institutional incarnations and its legacy continue to raise a number of basic yet under-studied questions. Why were the 'rational' modern legitimacy and the advent of political modernity in the newly emerging Balkan states predicated on the adoption of the liberal ideology? Which messages and institutional forms attracted the reformist Balkan elites to it so powerfully despite its apparent 'incompatibility' with the local social reality? How did the liberals deem it possible to make society first accept, and then sustain, such alien institutions and make them work? And what 'traces' did the socially and culturally diverse milieus and political traditions engrave into the principles, the institutions, and the values of liberal—that is, modern—government in the region?

Both as an ideology and a political format, liberalism encapsulates the transforming (revolutionizing) function assigned to 'imported' political and legal institutions in this part of Europe. Liberal constitutions, legal

codes and institutional arrangements were not intended to make into law what had already become a fact. Quite consciously, they were introduced as an instrument for producing ‘facts’—as forms creating their substance. This implied a radical reversal of the logic of political legitimization: the causes that had led to the institutionalization of modern ‘forms’ in the West turned into the expected *effects* from the operation of those forms. This is why nineteenth-century Balkan liberalism became synonymous with the (import of) political and economic modernity, creating a world that was perceived as structurally different from the existing one but indispensable for the survival of the community.

It is for this reason that Balkan liberalism brilliantly exemplifies the process of adaptation, re-imagination and in-translation—or what might be called ‘reconfiguration of tradition’ as part and parcel of political innovation. Key notions of the modern political vocabulary such as ‘democracy,’ ‘popular sovereignty,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘nation’ and ‘rule of law’ were semantically and functionally re-conceptualized in the process. The emergence and maturation of liberalism in the Balkans coincides with its zenith in Europe between the 1770s and the 1870s, sometimes dubbed the “age of liberalism,” when its principles dominated European political theory and practice. But despite some attempts at defining a certain common core to liberalism’s ‘classical’ principles, its regional and national variations are significant enough to warrant recognizing that, as John Gray has put it, “there is not one liberalism, but rather many, linked together only by a loose family resemblance.”¹ Hence there are major benefits to reap from a comparativist approach to the study of liberalism for its common elements can become visible only through a comparative interdisciplinary study of its regional and national manifestations.²

Connectivity and interaction between, and thus awareness of the mutual constitution of, discrete liberalisms are bound to inform this comparative perspective, since liberalism was, more often than not, disseminated by

¹ Alan S. Kahan identifies the “common liberal minimum program” in the nineteenth century as including private property, free trade, equality before the law, freedom of press, and representative government (*Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville* [New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2001], 141); John Gray identifies individualism, egalitarianism, universalism and meliorism as the common features of classical liberal thought (John Gray, *Liberalism* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995, 2nd edition], xii).

² Jürgen Kocka, in the introduction to *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert: Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, ed. Dieter Langewiesche (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1988), 10.

international circuits that came into existence in the course of or as a result of this process. One may speak of a cultural matrix analogous to the one that made possible the diffusion of nationalism. In fact, as far as liberalism's transfer to and dissemination in Southeastern Europe is concerned, we are actually talking of identical international networks and about that peculiar brand of liberalism that fused the notions of popular sovereignty and citizenship with the ethno-cultural frame of national romanticism and that is more widely known as liberal nationalism. There is a paradoxical quality to this kind of nationalism in that not only its spread but its formation had a vital transnational dimension. It was shaped to a great extent beyond the frontiers of the nation itself by a series of regional and pan-European conjunctures.³ Casting some light on these dialogues and exchanges promises to alter radically our understanding of not only the way ideologies circulated but also their character as mutually generated cross-national phenomena.

Contrary to the impression created by their normative politico-philosophical counter-positioning, historically "liberalism and the national feeling were born and developed together."⁴ The blending of the universalist project of modernity and the particularist project of the nation can be traced back to late-Enlightenment thought, but its heyday was the nineteenth century.⁵ Since the French Revolution the idea of national sovereignty and the united nation, to which power 'naturally' belonged, had evolved parallel to the idea of the individual entitled to equally 'natural' freedoms and inalienable rights. In keeping with the European Risorgimento nationalism of the age, Balkan nationalism was a liberal movement that saw nations as collective individuals possessing distinctive characteristics and legitimate interests.⁶ Personal rights buttressed a corresponding

³ For more recent studies emphasizing the transnational context, in which liberalism and nationalism were elaborated, from two different perspectives, see Maurizio Isabella, *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) and Angela Jianu, *A Circle of Friends. Romanian Revolutionaries and Political Exile, 1840–1859* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2011).

⁴ Guido de Ruggerio, *A History of European Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), 407.

⁵ The recent increase in attention to the complex relations between the Enlightenment project and the emergence of nationhood has been defined by Stathis Gourgouris as "an attempt to look beyond the Enlightenment's apparent cosmopolitanism to the epistemic relations between Enlightenment thought and the political processes that led to the emergence of a national(ist) discourse in Europe." *Dream Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greece* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996), 51.

⁶ "Nationalism and liberalism were terms used almost synonymously by contemporaries and followers of the nascent national movement, they were a single cause. Nationalists were called liberals and vice versa"—Peter Alter, "Nationalism and Liberalism in

concept of national rights, and this was a logical development, not a repudiation of the liberal doctrine.⁷ The disconnection and transformation of liberalism and nationalism into antagonistic political trends came about later in the course of the nineteenth century, and at different junctures for different societies.

In the course of its spreading, transformation and institutionalization since the late eighteenth century, liberal nationalism radically redefined the relationship between universalism and particularism, tradition and modernity, identity and change. As such, the process begs for a rethinking of the history of political and social thought in terms not of mere 'export,' 'transplantation' and 'adoption' but of a dialogue or circulation of ideas between the 'core' and the 'periphery,' where complex trajectories of interaction and modes of involvement of the recipient cultures occupy the center stage. Thus viewed, the question is not one of how faithfully a 'Western European' ideology and institutional practice were assimilated outside their place of origin and thus how 'valid' they were in each case.⁸ The question is about the values and expectations steering the selection, re-articulation and implementation of a universalist philosophy, giving heed to, on the one hand, diachronic aspects reflecting changeable socio-political and international contexts and, on the other, synchronic ones highlighting an array of (shifting and entangled) political-ideological positions.

My approach to liberalism, therefore, is not generic but historical in that it assumes the existence of historical forms of liberalism rather than a canonical set of liberal principles and institutions.⁹ What will concern us

Modern German History," in *Nationality, Patriotism and Nationalism in Liberal Democratic Societies*, ed. Roger Michener (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 1993), 83.

⁷ Maciej Janowski, "Wavering Friendship: Liberal and National Ideas in Nineteenth Century East-Central Europe," *Ab Imperio*, 2000, nos. 3–4, 69–90.

⁸ This is what actually dominated the studies of Balkan liberalisms, few as they were, such as the useful article of Victoria Brown, "The Adaptation of a Western Political Theory in a Peripheral State: The Case of Romanian Liberalism," in *Romania Between East and West: Historical Essays in Memory of Constantine C. Giurescu*, eds. Stephen Fischer-Galati, R. Florescu and G. Ursul (New York, 1982), 269–301. For more recent examples, see Daniel Barbu and Cristian Preda, "Building the State from the Roof Down," in *Liberty and the Search for Identity: Liberal Nationalisms and the Legacy of Empires*, ed. Ivan Z. Denes (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2006), 367–397.

⁹ Generally speaking, the generic approach privileges 1) generalization whereby diverse phenomena get stripped of their specifics and turned into an ideal-type, analytically largely inoperative abstraction; 2) teleological thinking that presumes the existence of a universal yardstick for measuring authenticity; and 3) statics over dynamics, assuming that a phenomenon (in our case liberalism) "exists statically outside the flow of time but slowly

here is not how genuinely Balkan national liberalisms followed a (stylized and idealized) set of original exemplars as contrived by the *grands récits* of 'Western liberalism,' but how and why values, ideas and principles, broadly identified as national-liberal and whose family resemblance conferred political identity on specific groups of actors,¹⁰ were understood, reformulated and applied as indispensable attributes of political modernity. This should shift the discussion from normative to contextual and variable aspects. Put differently, my aim is to show the historical logic and dynamism of what came to be known and practiced as Balkan national liberalisms rather than the degree to which we can consider them 'authentic examples' or 'distortions' thereof. This take on the issue starts from the assumption that studying the professed and practiced forms of 'Balkan' liberalism—without condescension or moralizing—can unlock important aspects inherent in the phenomenon, which had remained hidden or latent in its original manifestations. Hitherto 'Orientalized' patterns of nation- and state-building and political mobilization in nineteenth-century Europe can be made more adequate sense of, and the history of liberalism be re-examined in the perspective of non-core historical cases. Thus framed, the question about the historic Balkan forms of (national) liberalism is as much one about reconstructing the advent of modernity in the region as it is about understanding the nature of European liberalism in its fuller breadth and depth.

This chapter will focus on the examination, first, of Balkan (national-) liberal projects, which is to say liberal thought and ideology in the political and social fields, highlighting their connections and the varieties of local translations and adaptations; and second, the liberals' institutional legacies ensuing from the Serbian, the Romanian and the Bulgarian national-liberal movements as well as state- and nation-building experiences.

unfolds within it" (cf. David Hackett Fischer's classic *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* [New York: Harper and Row, 1970]).

¹⁰ Liberalism's intrinsic "fluidity" actually underscores the relevance of a debate among its students over what constitutes the irreducible liberal minimum, both in ideas and in practices, ensuring the identity of this "ideological family" and probing the analytical value of the term "liberalism." According to Michael Freeden, "whatever its internal configuration, liberalism is an intricate morphological composite of a number of values, which only satisfies membership of the liberal family when (1) an ineliminable minimum of all those values is present, and (2) no single value crowds out the others or curtails them to the point where they become insignificant." Freeden offers ten propositions against which the plurality of liberalisms can be assessed comparatively: Michael Freeden, "European Liberalisms: An Essay in Comparative Political Thought," *European Journal of Political Theory* 7, no. 1 (2008), 9–30 (13).

Less attention will be paid to the political history of liberal governments and parties, except when they manifestly impacted the above two central aspects. By occasionally extending the frame of comparison to include the broader European context, this chapter will consider liberalism in terms of certain key values and institutional innovations, rather than nominally, according to party affiliation.

PART I: THE BEGINNINGS

In terms of societal setting and political culture, Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania—the three cases at the center of this study, together with their ‘extensions’ into the Habsburg domain, Vojvodina¹¹ and Transylvania—presented some basic similarities as well as noteworthy differences. Arguably, the imposing social prevalence of the village in all those countries was to have a powerful impact on the entire range of modernizing socio-political projects. Yet despite their shared economic baselines, there were major structural differences among the three states, rooted in their divergent status under the Ottoman administrative system, and hence their social profile. Even in the second half of the nineteenth century, rural Serbia was a relatively undifferentiated, socially egalitarian society of free peasant owners. The common social nexus of the pioneers of the modern political order in Serbia—the self-defined Serbian liberals—was the Shumadian village. It is from there that they set off for the French and German universities, and on its rediscovered freedom-loving and creative tradition—the folkloric womb of the incipient Serbian nation—they built their modern projects. In the near-total absence of urban and rural upper classes, the Serbian state-employed intelligentsia came to serve as not only an intellectual but also a social elite. And even if by 1848 some upper-class social groups had emerged among the Serbs in the neighboring Habsburg Vojvodina, it was again the intellectuals who fought for the political leadership of the Habsburg Serbs and engaged with liberalism to this end.

The Romanian societal landscape was a picture of contrasts: the large landholders and the state held about 70 percent of the agricultural land, and the relative size and public weight of the urban middle classes, although

¹¹ The historical region of Vojvodina was the center of the cultural and political activities of the Serbian community living in southern Hungary, which also included the regions of Banat, Bačka, Srem and Baranja. For the sake of simplicity, we shall henceforth use Vojvodina as a collective designation for all these territories.

ethnically highly heterogeneous, was considerably greater than in Serbia. In addition to their continuous estate structure, the two Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia had enjoyed autonomous administration under Ottoman suzerainty which, though seriously diminishing the political leverage of the local boyars in the eighteenth century through the nomination of Phanariot princes, left the traditional social arrangement largely intact. The social profile of Transylvania in the Habsburg domain, where, according to Austrian statistics, Romanians made up 63.5 percent in the late eighteenth century, was similar. There, however, the number of both serfs and the (predominantly Hungarian) nobility were higher than in the principalities. Romania's better economic performance, against the backdrop of harsh social divisions, was accompanied by recurrent conflicts. While economic growth was far slower in Serbia, it also witnessed less social differentiation and greater social stability.¹² These major differences go a long way in explaining the rather different profiles of the political classes in the two countries. If the common feature of the emergent modern Serbian elite was their peasant origin, that of the Romanian political or intellectual class, including the liberally minded among them, was their quasi-aristocratic landowning, traditionally ruling origin. In the Balkan context, therefore, we can barely establish a clear correlation between social class and political doctrine, even for socially more differentiated societies such as Romania's.

The Bulgarian case, by comparison, was mixed, in both the political and social realms. Until as late as 1878, a Bulgarian state similar to those of the Serbs and the Romanians had failed to materialize, and the Bulgarian national-liberal movement, unfolding within the framework of the late Ottoman Empire, remained underground for most of the century. However, since the 1830s, the empire itself was undergoing a process of administrative and social reforms from which the incipient Bulgarian elite of economically rising local notables, manufacturers and merchants as well as intelligentsia (largely Russian and Greek, less Western-educated) benefited considerably. And although secession from the Empire dealt a heavy blow to the most prosperous among them, whereas the redistribution of land produced an overwhelming mass of small independent proprietors, at the beginning of its modern statehood, Bulgaria's society and

¹² On the economic and social contexts in Serbia and Romania in the nineteenth century, see Diana Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata. Modernost-legitimnost v Sărbija i Rumăniya prez XIX vek* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2001), 15–57.

civic infrastructure presented a far more differentiated picture than that of the Serbian principality of the first half of the nineteenth century.

These discrete contexts and political classes, even if only partially determining the choice of political philosophies, should be kept in mind when discussing the differing lists of liberal themes, with their particular visions of society and prognostications, in the three countries.

Early Liberal Reformism

Historiographic assessments of the outcome of the military struggles in the early nineteenth century among the Serbs and in the two Danubian (Romanian) principalities generally treat the resulting political regimes in those countries as not merely forming the institutional frameworks within which the future construction of nation-states became possible, but as directly establishing such states. The riots—between 1814 and 1817 in Serbia and in 1821 in Wallachia and Moldavia—had, it is true, eliminated Ottoman politico-administrative control and transferred power to a local political class. However, nowhere during the first half of the century did this class formulate or demonstrate—through its organization and exercise of political power—that it had been pursuing the creation of a national, let alone liberal, state. Its central concern had been the institutionalization of a viable self-government which, with very limited means, would succeed in absorbing local political elites and peasant populations and in promoting itself as the only factor of legitimacy in political life. Everywhere in the Balkans until the mid-nineteenth century—that is, during the early stages of modern state-building—the joint monopoly on power maintained by monarchs and aristocratic or bureaucratic oligarchies remained unchallenged, and the rivalry between them was the only legitimate form of political opposition. Projects towards independence and unification, economic or cultural improvement remained subordinated to the traditional hierarchically structured concept of the nation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Romanian gentry's critical reflections on the 'Old Regime' of the Phanariots was based on the conventions of the Enlightenment project and drew on French sources (France being the preferred destination for the Romanian boyars' sons, where they sought high-status education). This critical analysis, however, was far removed from radical solutions in the spirit of the subversive French social and political thought. From the 'menu' of Enlightenment ideas, the enlightened Romanians, much like the Serbian state reformers at the time, picked up the philosophy of the social contract, personal rights

and the appeals to education, rationality and order. The specific political formulas varied—from enlightened absolutism through a boyar state to an aristocratic republic—but all of them invariably implied an equation between the boyar estate and a legitimate polity. The boyar memorandum of 1802 by Dimitrache Sturdza arguing for the reorganization of Moldavia into an aristo-democratic republic, for example, was aimed at curbing arbitrary government in favor of a boyar oligarchic rule. Other plans called for a boyar state headed by a prince with limited powers. By delving into the Latin origins of the Romanians and into historical precedents, spearheaded by the Transylvanian (Latinist) School, the boyar opposition made respectable arguments, but until the 1830s these did not translate into a political program for unifying the two principalities on the basis of their common nationality.

The “national revolution” of 1821, as this anti-Ottoman rising contemplated as a joint action with the Greek underground organization Philiki Hetaireia is usually dubbed, deserves its reputation based on its results and not its ideology. It set into motion a chain of events whereby power in the two Danubian principalities passed irreversibly into the hands of the local Romanian political class, and their internal autonomy was reinstituted under the rule of the native boyars and princes.¹³ In the general context of the early nineteenth century, this “re-establishment of ancient rights”—the longtime quest of the upper nobility—would furnish the institutional framework for the gradual creation of the modern Romanian nation-state. As for the power ambitions of the disadvantaged small-scale nobility, they still lacked a proper ideology. The 1821 revolution, still far from signaling the emergence of a liberal strain inside the boyar estate, “underwent a transformation from a social into a national revolution and thus became the starting point of an ethnic revival without other social consequences.”¹⁴ Its purpose and its success, as noted by one of the leaders of the 1848 movement, Nicolae Bălcescu, was the defeat of Phanariotism and the “raising of Romanianism to power.”¹⁵

¹³ The conflict between the “Greeks” and the “Romanians” was political, not ethnic, and so the division between them did not follow strict nationality criteria.

¹⁴ Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației române moderne* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972; first published 1925), 92. Cf. Paul E. Michelson, “Romanian Liberalism, 1800–1947: definitions, periodization and a research agenda,” *Xenopoliana* 13, 2005, 1–4, 3–19.

¹⁵ Nicolae Bălcescu, “Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor” (1850), in *Nicolae Bălcescu. Opere*, vol. 1, part 2, ed. G. Zane (Scieri istorice, politice și economice) (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă “Regele Carol II,” 1940), 99–108, translated in *Discourses of Collective*

The battles between the prince and oligarchy characteristic of the initial years of the Serbian state, and indeed their outcome as well, as we will see, had a close analogue in the Danubian principalities in the two decades following the uprising. The constitutional projects that the boyar contenders advocated were essentially meant to provide legal security for their political and economic privileges. True, the lesser boyars continued to invigorate the political debate with enlightened reformist demands. The “Carbonari constitution” (*Constituția cărvunarilor*) of 1822—perhaps the best illustration of the gentry’s political credo of the time—was inspired by the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It called for constitutional rule, separation of legislative and executive power, equality before the law, and basic civil rights. However, all these ‘modern liberal ideas’ remained embedded in the fundamental principle of estate privileges and equality *within* the boyar ranks. There was still a way to go before the lesser nobility would attempt to fuse its knowledge of modern political precepts with a similarly modern social program.¹⁶ Until it happened—in programmatic terms during the 1840s and as practical politics since the late 1850s—the royal heads and noble assemblies in the two principalities kept drawing upon the moderate reformist tradition of the previous decades, whose institutional models were enlightened and whose values were patriarchal and aristocratic. The “Organic Statutes (Regulations)” for Wallachia and Moldavia of 1831 and 1832, which would remain in force until 1858, while envisaging certain limits to monarchic power and an embryonic form of separation of powers, did not abolish noble privilege or introduce equality before the law.

A serious challenge to the age-old power relations from the positions of a radical political action gradually began to take shape in the 1830s and 1840s. Its champions, calling themselves ‘liberals,’ emerged from a new generation of mostly lesser boyars and high state functionaries who had recently risen to the rank of boyar, as well as sons of the traditional ruling elite. European, above all French, education would supply this young boyar generation—at least the farsighted among them and those sensitive to the threat of losing power—with the ideological instruments of

Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945), vol. 2, eds. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2007), 469.

¹⁶ As Vlad Georgescu pointed out, “the boyars showed a certain interest in the development of the cities, but not of the citizens, whom they often succeeded in disregarding completely”: *Istoria ideilor politice românești (1369–1878)* (Munich: Jon Dimitru Verlag, 1987), 101.

modern politics and modern legitimization. The Romanian liberals and the Romanian 'bourgeoisie' of the first half of the nineteenth century were thus represented primarily by 'intellectualized' and 'commercialized' nobility. The origins of Romanian conservatism and liberalism, between 1821 and 1858, lie in the ideological and political contestations unfolding within the boyar estate.

The radically new horizon of expectations, which was beginning to shape this generation's projects for reforms, transpires from the writings of an anonymous liberal author of the 1830s:

That place where a society of many people is dwelling is called fatherland, because of the name of the fathers and forefathers who lived there as a society. It is not the land that should be called a fatherland, but the political dwelling, that is the society of those who live together, making use of and sharing each other, whose sharing is bound by love and the common interests and purposes... therefore we could not say that Romania is our fatherland, because we haven't had and we still don't have here a society that we may share and make use of.¹⁷

"Fatherland," then, was neither the land of the "historic state" nor that of the *ethnie* or the biological ancestry, but that of the "political dwelling" of a society sharing full civil rights and duties and marshaled by a sense of the common good. This vision was far more normatively liberal than those that would prevail in the approaching national-romantic surge and, tellingly, most of those that would be formulated later during the century from apparently post-romantic positions.

In Transylvania, where there was practically no Romanian aristocracy and the Romanians were a 'tolerated nation' with no political rights, it was the Greek Catholic (Uniate) clergy that led the battle for the reinstatement of these rights in the form of a Romanian 'privileged nation' alongside the Hungarian nobility, the Szeklers and the Saxons. Their arguments, as elaborated by the Transylvanian (Latinist) School, were historical, based on the affirmation of 'pure' Roman origins and the theory of continuous existence of the Romanians on that territory since antiquity. The peak of this movement, which fit in with the general atmosphere of cultural revival and political reform in an era of Habsburg 'enlightened despotism,' is embodied in a document, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, submitted to Emperor Leopold II in 1791. It asks for the recognition of Romanians as

¹⁷ Paul Cornea, *Originile romantismului românesc. Spiritul public, mișcarea ideilor și literatură între 1780–1840* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972), 208, cited in Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 377.

the “fourth” nation in the constitutional structure of Transylvania, their proportionate representation in the local administration, and a “national congress” led by the Uniate and Orthodox bishops. The plan, considered to have set the stage for the Romanian national movement in Transylvania, was not approved. Nor did it breed, in the following decades, a Transylvanian movement for independence and unification. Its long-term effect, as that of the Transylvanian School generally, lay elsewhere: the idea of the historical continuity of the Romanians in Transylvania, which they aggressively espoused, would become the cornerstone of Romanian nationalism of both the liberal and illiberal variety.

The beginnings of Serbian liberalism, like those of Romanian liberalism, can be identified in the oligarchic opposition to authoritarian arbitrariness ensuing from the political transformations during and after the Napoleonic wars. At the height of the ‘Serbian revolution,’ as Leopold Ranke dubbed the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813), the Austrian-born Serbian jurist Božidar Grujović (1778–1807) came up with several political statements intended to provide a constitutional framework for the exercise of power in the incipient Serbian state. Couched in a late Enlightenment rationalist spirit, they built on notions of personal freedom, political and legal security, rule of law, and justice. They are generally considered to be the “first clear thoughts about legality and constitutionalism,” as Stojan Novaković later put it. Grujović’s legacy had little immediate effect on the actual practice of government. But it was important in setting the stage for a new, more modern vision of constituting political power in the budding Serbian state, based on the concept of natural rights and supplemented by democratic principles.¹⁸

For the next three decades the constitutional and political debates in Serbia, in close resemblance and synchronicity with those in the two Romanian principalities, were dominated by confrontation between the practice of absolutist government and the idea of division of power between prince and state bureaucracy (rather than a landed boyar class as in Romania). The critique of royal despotism by Vuk Karadžić (1787–1864), as famously spelled out in his *Letter to Prince Miloš* (1832), was launched on behalf of an enlightened, rationalist and constitutional vision of the state based on a social contract between the people and the ruler, the supremacy of law and the security of the “life, property and dignity” of the prince’s sub-

¹⁸ Milan Subotić, *Sricanje slobode: Studije o počecima liberalne političke misli u Srbiji XIX veka*. (Niš: Gradina, Belgrade: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, 1992), 16–23; Danilo N. Basta, “Životni put Božidara Grujovića (Teodora Filipovića),” in *Liberalna misao u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Biblioteka Suočavanja, 2001), 11–29.

jects. In arguing for these reforms, Karadžić, remarkably enough, evoked the ‘example’ of the Ottoman government, which, he asserted, since the beginning of the Tanzimat reforms in 1830, “has been continuously arranging itself in a European way.”¹⁹ Subsequent constitutional drafts were the product of the so-called “Defenders of the Constitution”—mostly Habsburg Serbs who, as a leading historian of nineteenth-century Serbia wrote, “for the first time in our political life introduced the idea of the law and tried, from what was still a primitive country with patriarchal notions and *haidouk* [brigand] customs, to create a modern state.”²⁰ They sought to introduce legal security and an independent judiciary, guarantees for property, limited royal power, equality before the law and free trade. Aside from a certain nod to French liberal constitutionalism in all that, their political culture and ideals for good government drew heavily on the Habsburg cameralist tradition and bureaucratic institutional models—the oligarchic ‘Constitutionalists’ regime,’ which they instituted between 1842 and 1868, epitomized precisely these Central European values and models. The freedoms and rights they stood for were economic, not political.

Budding Serbian constitutionalism, as exhibited in these initial political projects, drew on the early German liberal tradition, with its key concept of the “legal state,” *Rechtsstaat*, which itself had roots in the German historicist school and Hegelianism. Seeking to strike a middle path between liberalism and absolutism, it created barriers against the exercise of arbitrary power while circumventing the issue of the political participation of the population. (The Prussian constitution of 1849, which would serve as the model for the Serbian constitution of 1869, was also an expression of this compromise.) These interferences were due at least in part to the shared predilections of “bureaucratic liberalism,” or *Beamterliberalismus*, typically nurtured in countries with predominantly state-employed intelligentsia such as Serbia and Germany in the early nineteenth century.²¹

¹⁹ Cited in Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 26. The division of power Vuk envisaged did not imply partition into legislature, executive and judiciary: it meant mutual restraint between the prince and the government, the State Council, made up of notables (local leaders and educated Serbs, mostly immigrants from Habsburg Vojvodina).

²⁰ Slobodan Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: G. Kon, 1908), 141–142. Foremost among these projects were those written by Dimitrije Davidović (the Sretenje Constitution of 1835) and Jovan Hadžić, who was also the author of the Serbian Civil Code of 1844 (Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 31–52).

²¹ See, for example, Barbara Vogel, “Beamterliberalismus in der Napoleonischen Ära,” in *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert*, 45–63.

As in the Danubian principalities during this period, the notion of the 'legal state' did not imply the notion of 'national state.' The early Serbian state-builders and reformers picked up those elements of the European (mostly German) liberal doctrine which aimed at limiting paternalistic power and arbitrary rule and protecting private property, personal rights and equality before the law. But notions like political rights, a free public sphere, popular representation—in brief, the issues of political freedom and participation—were either absent or secondary. The 'Constitutionalists' regime,' in close similarity with the one imposed with the "Organic Statutes" in the two Romanian provinces, was a product of this early liberal reformism, subordinated to the ideals and the organization of the modern bureaucratic state, which was rooted in the political theory and ethical philosophy of the Enlightenment but which degenerated into a 'bureaucratic absolutism' with little respect for the rule of law.

The actual proponents of Serbian liberalism properly speaking were two young professors at the Belgrade Lyceum, Dimitrije Matić (1821–1884) and Kosta Cukić (1826–1879), whose lectures captivated the imagination and spoke to the anxieties of the first self-defined liberal generation, which received its education in the late 1840s and the early 1850s. While continuing the tradition of cultivating, on the German model, the "Principles of the Rational State Law," as he entitled one of his major works (1851), Matić took the contrasting of the "legal state" to the "police state" one sizeable step further by upholding a Kantian notion of "freedom as legality," personal autonomy and rule of law and demanding a definite check on the state's power to interfere with individual freedom. This did not lead him to endorse the classical liberal precept of the "night-watchman state," though. Instead he affirmed the state's social functions of "raising public morality among the people and promoting general prosperity" as well as exerting "appropriate control and supreme guidance." "Each state in this sense should be simultaneously a legal and a political state."²² Matić was the first to talk about the "people's rights" (*narodna prava*), such as personal freedom, political and civil rights, which constituted a "natural limit to the state power," and about popular representation as the "organ of the people's rights." A constitutional monarchy with a representative body safeguarding the "people's rights" (not sovereignty) was for Matić the "historical" form of the state that stood closest to the "rational idea

²² Milan Subotić, "Liberalna misao Dimitrija Matića," in *Liberalna misao u Srbiji*, 51–55.

of the state.”²³ As an avowed Hegelian, he came up with a decidedly moderate version of liberalism “wrapped in the fog of German idealistic philosophy” and sentimentality, where “national government appears well-meaning and innocently harmless,” as Slobodan Jovanović described it. It eclectically brought together diverse notions such as constitutionalism, the national principle, paternalism and monarchism.²⁴ Even so, his views of the state, of the civic reading of ‘collective rights,’ and of popular representation make Matić an intermediary figure between the first and the second phase of Serbian liberalism by presenting a more accomplished political-liberal vision.

In many ways Kosta Cukić’s social thought followed the same direction: for him, too, individual liberty, private property, constitutionalism and supremacy of law were fundamental values and indispensable conditions for the advancement of society. But Cukić’s priorities were different. He was unsympathetic to the people’s political representation and “rights”: his preoccupation was with the legal state and the rule of law, not the people’s involvement in matters of power.²⁵ If he was a classical liberal in any sense, it was in his economic theory. Remarkably, Cukić rejected economic autarky and mercantilism, upheld the principle of a free domestic and international market and competition in the face of widespread fears about the ruinous effects of unchecked imports on the economies of the less developed countries, and opposed state economic entrepreneurship on the premise that “the government, as a familiar bad economist, should not engage in economic speculation.”²⁶ The combination of economic freedom and conservative-liberal political convictions was not an infrequent one, as the position of other leading Serbian economists, like Čedomil Mijatović and Aleksa Spasić, indicates. As in Romania, the idea of a ‘minimalist state’ and a free market appealed more to the political conservatives than to the freedom-fighting liberals.

²³ Ibid., 56–58. While the representation was assigned certain controlling functions over the executive, concerning the legislature it had only an advisory role, while the monarch kept his sovereign legislative power intact.

²⁴ Branko Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji na srpski liberalizam u XIX veku* (Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića, 2005), 207, 244–248.

²⁵ Boško Mijatović, “Iskušenja liberalizma Koste Cukića,” in *Liberalna misao u Srbiji*, 88.

²⁶ Ibid., 88–97.

The Romanian and the Serbian "1848"

The period between 1830 and 1848 in the two Danubian principalities was a time of radicalist fermentation catalyzed by the political ambitions of the Western-educated boyar sons and the lesser gentry. Their political radicalism fed as much on the revolutionary French legacy and virulent romanticism, which they knew firsthand, as on resistance to Russian tutelage (in the form of the Protectorate that Russia had established between 1829 and 1854), thus fusing political reformism with nationalism.²⁷ The radical message they delivered contained two central themes: democracy and nationalism. The former implied abolition of estate privileges, equality before the law and the solving of the peasant question; the latter implied unification and independence of the two principalities, Wallachia and Moldavia. As with the liberals elsewhere in the Balkans, both catchwords were underpinned by a new concept of the nation: one no longer identical with the traditional elite, but signifying instead the "people" as a whole; and by a new notion of legitimate government, one that spoke on behalf and in the interest of all Romanians. The staunch purveyors of these themes were gathered in the Society of Romanian Students in Paris—an impressive congregation of future statesmen, representing the whole spectrum of liberal opinions, from the most radical to the most moderate: the brothers Dumitru and Ion C. Brătianu, Nicolae Bălcescu, Constantin A. Rosetti, Alexandru C. Golescu (from Wallachia), Mihail Kogălniceanu and Ion Ionescu de la Brad (from Moldavia). Jules Michelet, Edgar Quinet, Adam Mickiewicz and Giuseppe Mazzini were the main figures who enthralled their imagination and set the agenda of the first, national-romantic generation of Romanian liberals.²⁸

The hour of this group of well-educated idealists struck in the spring of 1848. For the Romanians, the genuine revolution—"democratic and social," as the radical-liberal Nicolae Bălcescu (1819–1852) called it—took place in Wallachia. Two years after the upheaval Bălcescu wrote:

²⁷ Ioan Stanomir, "The Temptation of the West: The Romanian Constitutional Tradition," in Michaela Czobor-Lupp and J. Stefan Lupp, *Moral, Legal and Political Values in Romanian Culture* (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002), 80.

²⁸ As Catherine Durandin points out, "these youths will be the authors of the reference texts of romantic liberal thought and those who will take the major decisions on the Principalities in 1859, 1866 and 1878": Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor* (Iași: Institutul European, 1998), 89. On the literature dealing with the impact of the French radical-liberal and romantic currents on this group, see Keith Hitchins, *The Romanians, 1774–1866*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, 235.

The ideas and interests of the people had changed, and the long-awaited revolution could not limit itself to the platform of 1821. Now it was not enough to want the state to become Romanian, for the issue of the people's poverty also had to be resolved; property, the basis of society, of public wealth and happiness, had to be given a new organization. Crushing the [organic] regulations that monopolized the state, the ownership of land and capital in the hands of the *ciocoi*, it was all absolutely necessary to proclaim the democratization of the state by equality of rights, of the land, by giving it to the peasants, and of capital by credit institutions organized by the state; hence the need to accomplish a democratic and social revolution. Such was the program of the revolution of 1848...²⁹

Its pursuits were laid down in the "Proclamation of Islaz," the revolutionary "constitution" that marked the highest point of the national-democratic ideology of the Romanian *pașoptiștii*, or 1848-ers. "The Romanian people is waking up . . . to declare its sovereign right," ran the opening of this proclamation, followed by a remarkable list of liberal demands concerning civil liberties, political, social and economic reforms, and independence from foreign rule. It stipulated the abolition of the feudal privileges of the boyars, land reform (elimination of corvée labor and giving land to the peasants in return for compensation to the landowners), a broad popular representation, ministerial responsibility, equality before the law, independence of the judiciary, civil rights for the Jews, freedom of the press and of association, progressive taxation, secularization of the monastic lands, and general free education.³⁰ Universal suffrage was limited to those with the "capacity to read and write" and restricted by a two-tier voting system. The provisional government, which the Wallachian revolutionaries established in Bucharest between June and September 1848, tried to implement these demands, but fierce boyar opposition forced them to forego the more radical ones. In fact, political enfranchisement and the land question caused dissension in the revolutionary liberal camp itself—and these issues would continue to sow discord in its ranks until as late as World War I.

The Moldavian revolutionary program was, by comparison, moderate. Composed by Mihail Kogălniceanu (1817–1891), the leader of the Moldavian

²⁹ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor* (1850), in *Nicolae Bălcescu. Opere*, I/2, ed. G. Zane (Scrieri istorice, politice și economice) (Bucharest: Fundația pentru literatură și artă "Regele Carol II," 1940), 99–108, translated in *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 2, 469–470. Bălcescu himself had taken part in the 1848 events in Paris before returning to Wallachia to play a leading role in the revolution that broke out in Bucharest in June 1848.

³⁰ *Anul 1848 în Principatele române. Acte și documente*, vol. 1, 490–495.

liberals and a prominent historian and future statesman, it envisaged an elected constitutional monarchy, a division of powers, personal and civil freedoms, abolition of privilege and of slavery, a National Assembly elected by qualified vote (with respect to wealth, education and position) as an embodiment of national sovereignty next to the head of state, and unification of the two principalities.³¹

Present-day assessments of the 1848 revolution are strikingly identical with those of the liberals themselves, portraying it as “important above all for its endeavor to work out and implement a program for the creation of modern Romania.”³² The crushing of the revolution convinced conservative reformists and radical liberals alike that, however the modernization of Romania was to be understood, it was unfeasible in a ‘supra-national’ framework, in a situation of administrative division of the two principalities and foreign sovereignty. “Internal freedom is unattainable without external freedom,” concluded Bălcescu in his above-quoted treatise devoted to the role of revolution in the formation of the Romanian national spirit. The dialectic between inner and outer freedom, which would characterize Serbian and Bulgarian liberalism as well, in post-1848 Wallachia and Moldavia was clearly pushed in the direction of “unity and nationality.” Bălcescu was at pains to prove the existence of what he called a “revolutionary synthesis” in the Romanian evolution as a singular bridge between its ‘universality’ and ‘particularity.’ For this reason, he dubbed the 1821 uprising a “democratic revolution” in that it “wanted all Romanians to be free and equal, the state to be Romanian.” The 1848 revolution “wanted the Romanians not only to be free, but also to have the right to property, without which liberty and equality are lies. To this end, it added the word ‘brotherhood,’ that major condition for social progress. It was a social revolution.” But the logical finale of this revolutionary series was

³¹ These demands were laid down in two documents written by Kogălniceanu: “The Wishes of the National Party of Moldavia” and “Project for a Moldavian Constitution”: *Anul 1848 în Principatele române. Acte și documente*, vol. 4 (Bucharest, 1902), 89–137.

³² Gheorghe Platon, “Societatea românească între medieval și modern,” in *Cum s-a înfăptuit România modernă*, eds. Gheorghe Platon et al. (Iași: Editura Universității “Al. Cuza,” 1993), 73. For the leading Romanian liberal of the interwar period, Eugen Lovinescu, 1848 was a watershed in Romanian history, ushering in the modern era: Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 165–168. For the official communist-era Romanian historiography, on the other hand, the 1848 revolution was important above all because of its call for national unification and the creation of a Romanian nation-state: see, for example, Mircea Mușat and Ion Ardeleanu, *From Ancient Dacia to Modern Romania* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1985), 273–275.

actually turned into a condition for the success of the democratic and the social revolutions:

The next revolution cannot be confined to asking the Romanians to be free, equal, owners of land and capital, and brothers associated to achieve the jointly desired progress. It cannot possibly be limited to seeking liberty from within, which is impossible to achieve without having freedom from outside, freedom from foreign domination, but it will ask for national unity and liberty. Its slogan will be *justice, brotherhood, unity*. It will be a national revolution.³³

During the 'restoration period' following 1848, Romanian radical-liberal agitation would continue outside the principalities, mainly in Western European capitals, and would be increasingly dominated by demands not for liberal domestic reforms but for national unification.

The 'national issue' in Transylvania towered over all other issues in 1848. Already by then, Simion Bărnuțiu (1808–1864), the foremost radical liberal nationalist, had developed strong reservations concerning Hungarian liberalism, which he saw as threatening the Romanian national identity with extinction.³⁴ Like his Bulgarian counterpart, Lyuben Karavelov, two decades later, Bărnuțiu discarded historical right as the basis for solving the national question, since it provided "the least service to justice." In response to the Hungarian revolutionaries' demand for the unification of Transylvania with Hungary, he delivered a memorable speech (*Discursul de la Blaj*) and initiated a sixteen-point "National Petition" directed at Vienna and the Transylvanian diet, where he outlined the main demands of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania: recognition, in the name of the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, of the Romanians as a nation equal with the others and of the Orthodox Church; proportionate representation in the diet and all the branches of government; abolition of serfdom without compensation payments; use of the Romanian language in administration and legislation; and a Romanian national guard. Bărnuțiu called for these demands to be achieved by nonviolent, legal means, but this course became largely impractical after the proclamation of the union of Transylvania with Hungary and the outbreak of the Austro-Hungarian conflict. Romanian revolutionaries sided with the imperial authorities against their Hungarian co-fellows. Nicolae Bălcescu's

³³ Bălcescu, *Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor*, 471.

³⁴ The 1842 debates on the use of the Hungarian language in Romanian schools provided an occasion for Bărnuțiu to spell out his stance for the first time.

and other Wallachians' efforts to save the ideals of the revolution by striking a deal with the Hungarian rebels were in vain. Until the end of the century, some social and cultural issues aside, recognition of the Romanians as an equal nation and of the Orthodox faith as an official religion would make up the basic but unfulfilled Transylvanian Romanian program.³⁵ For that reason, after 1848, Transylvanian Romanian liberalism, despite the continuing allure of various unionist and federalist plots, was shaped much more by its confrontation with Hungarian liberalism than by its collaboration with and support by the Romanian liberals across the Carpathians.

The late 1840s and the early 1850s also marked the appearance of that first generation of learned Serbs born in Serbia but sent abroad for education on state bursaries in order to train a 'local' bureaucratic and intellectual elite, who had to substitute for the one imported from Habsburg Vojvodina. It is from this group that the first self-defined liberals came—Jevrem Grujić, Milovan Janković, Stojan Bošković and Vladimir Jovanović. This handful of foreign-educated young intellectuals aspired to impose a view on government and the national priorities different from the absolutist one, modern in its principles and organization, which would also sanction their right to participation in political life. Serbian students abroad, according to their spiritual leader, Vladimir Jovanović (1833–1922), were afflicted by “the divergences separating patriarchal, stock-breeding and agrarian Serbia from the advanced cultured states,” yet they were equally convinced that “with the liberation and unification of the Serbian people, [Serbia] would take its place in the advanced cultured world.”³⁶ In the name of this credo, they launched a debate (“the first political polemics in Serbia that took place around principles”) with the one-time political class, centering on the internal organization of the nation, that is, the supremacy of the representative or the absolutist institutions. In the traditional political rivalry between monarch and oligarchy, a new, formerly unforeseen claimant intervened—the sovereign people, whom they, the educated “sons of the people,” were called upon to represent and defend.³⁷

³⁵ Vlad Georgescu, *The Romanians: A History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1991), 154–160.

³⁶ Vladimir Jovanović, *Uspomene*, ed. V. Krestić (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1988), 67.

³⁷ Gale Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism: Vladimir Jovanovic and the Transformation of Serbian Politics* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975), 15–17, 23, 176; Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 53–54, 132.

Like in Romania, the clash over fundamental principles and convictions overlay a sociocultural one. Against the *nemačkari*, the imported “Germans” from the Habsburg Monarchy with their cameralist and autocratic ethos and cultural arrogance, there rose up the first generation of ‘local intelligentsia,’ centered on the small group of mainly French high-school graduates, the *parizlija*, with roots in the local rural culture and admiration for the radical-democratic legacy of 1789 and 1848. The division was thus socially and culturally based and was expressed in a political-doctrinal form. The domestic liberals sought to replace the paternalistic regime of ‘imported’ modernizing elitists with a broadly representative one, in which the key role would belong to the Popular Assembly—the embodiment of popular sovereignty and the national Serbian tradition.

Yet it was precisely the encounter with Slovak and Magyar ‘student nationalism,’ strongly infused with liberalism, in various educational centers of the Habsburg Empire that informed the incipient ideological and organizational forms of this early Serbian nationalism. The entanglement—both as an inspiration and a threat—with the rising Magyar liberal-national movement led by Lajos Kossuth was as crucial for the formation of incipient Serb nationalism as Greek nationalism was for the early Bulgarian awakeners. Similarly to the Bulgarian case, that impact was exerted by *belles lettres* translations. Those by Jovan Jovanović Zmaj, the “official *guslar* (poet) of the national liberals,” of the poetry of Sándor Petőfi, Hungary’s canonic national-romantic bard, were so skillful and popular as to be considered and sung by generations of Serbs as their own national lyrics.³⁸ The political leader of the Habsburg Serbs, Svetozar Miletić (1826–1901), for his part, used to call himself the “Serbian Kossuth.” While theoretical influences changed over time, in terms of actual political interaction and direct models, the national-liberal movements of the Czechs, Slovaks, Hungarians and Germans remained paramount for the Serbian liberals.

As elsewhere in East-Central Europe, 1848 set the stage for the accession of these “freedom-loving patriots” and their political propaganda. Their initial arena was the Society of Serbian Youth. The society was founded in 1847 as a literary circle of the Belgrade Lyceum students, and the following year, under the sway of the rising revolutionary tide, it engaged in political campaigning. Although its members had little sympathy for the oligarchic

³⁸ Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 413–414.

regime of the paternalist and cameralist state-class, their messages had a wholly 'external' destination. They called for a complete national liberation, first by achieving full independence for the autonomous yet vassal Serbian principality from the Ottoman suzerain, and second, by unifying "all Serbs" in this national state. These were the objectives behind their clandestine support for the rebel Serbs in Habsburg Vojvodina and the designs for the creation of a unified South Slav state. The scale of the 1848 movement in Serbia, however, was considerably smaller than that in the neighboring Habsburg lands or the Romanian principalities. If anything, wrote Vladimir Jovanović in his *Memoirs*, "the spirit of the time spurred in Serbia a movement of ideas which, although failing to change the internal political situation for the better, at least raised public awareness of the national solidarity of Serbia with the other parts of Serbdom, and, along with it, awareness of a Slav unity."³⁹

But in fact, neither in the principality nor among the Habsburg Serbs did liberalism crystallize as an independent ideology or political force in 1848. The main adversary for all Serbian nationalists in Hungary, both liberally minded and traditionalist (feudal, clerical, military), was the Hungarian revolutionary government, and they all agreed on the necessity to uphold the Monarchy, preferably in the form of an Austro-Slavic confederation, and the principle of territorial autonomy for the Serbs. For the liberals the 1848 movement was an occasion to spell out, for the first time, their demands for collective, national rights—as a prerequisite for, if not as yet subordinating, individual rights and legal equality—which would remain the leitmotif of their political program in the following decades. For the Serbs, Svetozar Miletić argued in May 1848, equality was not enough, since it did not guarantee the preservation of the nation. What he demanded was Serbian administrative autonomy while, at the same time, clamoring for Serbia to go to war against the Ottoman Empire and complete the Serbs' unification. If there was anything characteristically liberal in all that, it was the demand for a representative system and a passionate Slav consciousness and solidarity.⁴⁰ National liberation and unification, therefore, not liberal political, even less social reform, was the common agenda of the Serbian 1848-ers on the two sides of the border.

³⁹ Jovanović, *Uspomene*, 38.

⁴⁰ Imre Röss, "The Value System of Serb Liberalism," in *Liberty and the Search for Identity*, 347–348; Branko Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 193, 205.

With one inconspicuous exception. In an 1849 article, "An Overview of the State," the member of the Society of Serbian Youth and future spokesman of the liberals in the Serbian Assembly, Jevrem Grujić (1826–1895), pointed to the absence of, and the inextricable connection between, "inner" and "outer" freedom in Serbia. The latter, Grujić maintained, had no meaning without the former; the state's *raison d'être* was to "execute the will of the people as manifested through the laws passed by the assembly," which was indispensable for the nation's dignity and prosperity. The early Serbian liberals such as Grujić tried to delegitimize the old regime by accusing it of having produced a state incapable of providing either external or internal freedom. There was no state in the proper sense of the word where it had proved unable to fulfill its "purpose": for "the people in it to be not only externally but also internally free."⁴¹ Remarkably, considering the revolutionary upsurge in which this political manifesto was issued, Grujić called for a solution not via radical political reforms, let alone revolution, but through political and cultural education for the sake of creating an "enlightened nation," which he saw—very much in the vein of Dimitrije Matić's conservative liberalism—as "vital to enable the Serbian people to free itself from [outward and inward] oppression." Grujić's program, linking "the people's outer liberation" through national education to its "inner liberation" through political education of the nation, is considered to be "the first declaration of Serbian liberalism."⁴² Whether it deserves this title or not, it is an eloquent illustration of the convictions of that most self-defined cohort of early Serbian liberals who would reach ideational and political maturity in the late 1850s and the early 1860s.

The decade following 1848, marked by repressive regimes across the region, was a time of stagnation for the national-liberal movements. True, the students of the Belgrade Lyceum, gathered in the "Liberal Club," added several liberal items to the list of national-liberation goals—freedom of the press, of assembly and of religion, free education and trade, personal security and the inviolability of property, and enlargement and improvement of the network of schools and roads.⁴³ However, they and their exiled followers abroad continued to be deprived of any lawful right to voice and pursue these freedoms and demands at home. It was only

⁴¹ Jevrem Grujić, "Obzor drzave," in *Neven Sloge* (Belgrade, 1849), 171–172.

⁴² Jovan Skerlić, *Omladina i njena književnost* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1966), 39.

⁴³ Dragoslav Janković, *O političkim strankama u Srbiji XIX veka* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1951), 109–111; Jaša Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka i struja u Srbiji*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1947), 257–258.

in the late 1850s and early 1860s that liberally minded Serbs in both the principality and the Habsburg Empire would form a politically coherent group. It would gain a program and proper organization even later—in 1869 in Habsburg Vojvodina (the Serbian Popular Liberal Party) and in 1881 (the Popular Liberal Party) in the (by then) Kingdom of Serbia. A unified national association bringing together liberals from the two sides of the Sava River, the United Serbian Youth, would emerge in 1866. During the first half of the nineteenth century, liberal nationalism—as distinct from and far exceeding the statist designs for a “Balkan Piedmont” of the ruling bureaucrats such as Ilija Garašanin—remained an insignificant force in Serbia and among the Habsburg Serbs.

The differences between the “Romanian” and the “Serbian” 1848 are not simply in revolutionary scale or programmatic clarity. In the Danubian principalities and Transylvania, much more than in Serbia (and later Bulgaria), the social and the national overtones in the revolutionary rhetoric merged—a phenomenon already visible at the time of Tudor Vladimirescu’s uprising of 1821. In the hands of the liberal-democratic Romanian revolutionaries, the issues of social emancipation and national liberation constituted the two sides in the definition of freedom of the nation; in the Serbian context, both inside and outside the principality, “inner freedom” as defined by Grujić and Miletić was connected with the abolition of arbitrary autocratic rule and anti-absolutism, not social emancipation. In Serbia and Bulgaria the social issue would emerge, between the 1850s and the 1870s, as one of capitalist, class-based division of labor in the face of international market competition and imperialist sensitivities. Hence the discourse about social harmony in the two groups of countries in the 1840s to the 1870s had different referents—the boyar class in the former case and (the threat of) pauperism in the latter.

Farther in the interior of the Ottoman Balkans, and even in independent Greece, the 1848 upheaval was barely an issue at all. National-romantic stirrings and political unrest, which typically galvanized around the Russian military operations in or close to the region, failed to crystallize into more or less coherent visions for political and social transformation until after the Crimean War (1853–1856). Yet certain late-Enlightenment national-liberal themes made inroads into the writings of some Bulgarian revivalists, most of them disciples of Greek schools and academies. One such notable figure was Ivan Seliminski (1799–1867).

Starting from the assumption about the “natural equality” of humans, Seliminski asserted that there were also “identical means for creating their

prosperity in this world”—the continuous striving for perfection by way of reason.⁴⁴ A nation's place on the ladder of progress, considering the “identity of natural laws” in the world, depended above all on its “intellectual advancement,” that is, on its capacity to pursue perfection through rational knowledge. The very existence of the nation was said to reside in the cultivation of such capacity: “The sound unity and agreement is achieved by means of the true notions of things acquired through the dissemination of education among the entire nation and through [its] uniform moral cultivation . . . Through their pursuit of progress, nations fulfill their destiny . . .”⁴⁵ Thus the nation was neither a natural given nor an end in itself but a matter of “hard and continuous” educational work whose instruments were “truth, knowledge and science” and whose ultimate purpose was “building heaven on earth.”⁴⁶

Selimiski echoed typical liberal anxieties when, in the 1840s, he warned against the great risks of premature emancipation and democratization. The Bulgarians, he wrote, might “show themselves unworthy of the divine gift of freedom . . . since with freedom emerge many passions that shatter the foundations of the state.” In critical situations an inexperienced society was prone to “relinquish its existence to the hands of the most unscrupulous, as there are no superior forces . . .” Therefore, without prior psychological and economic emancipation, and political and civic progress, the nation might “change many times the type of its government and still not gain its political freedom.”⁴⁷ In one more respect Seliminski's vision of the national community was more characteristically liberal than that of his revolutionary successors: while advocating that “each nation should be free,” he specified that

a nation's freedom lies in the unity of personal freedoms of each one of its members. These freedoms are commensurate with the horizon of the

⁴⁴ “Such is the natural destination of man—a striving for the achievement of perfection, of the divine”: Ivan Seliminski, “Estestvenoto prednaznachenie na choveka” (1843), in Dr. Ivan Seliminski, *Izbrani sǎchineniya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1979), 36. Mihail Arnaudov associates this credo with the philosophy of Herder and Kant as well as with the influence of Condorcet and Turgot on Seliminski's thought: Mihail Arnaudov, *Seliminski: zhivot, delo, idei 1799–1867* (Sofia: BAN, 1938), 449.

⁴⁵ Seliminski, *Izbrani sǎchineniya*, 374–379.

⁴⁶ Arnaudov, *Seliminski*, 446–451.

⁴⁷ Seliminski, *Izbrani sǎchineniya*. Seliminski cited the recent examples of Crimea and Georgia, which attained autonomous and independent status yet later fell permanently under Russian domination “since they were unable to govern themselves.” (Arnaudov, *Seliminski*, 481.)

nation's *knowledge*, with its shrewd discerning of what is right or wrong for its future, [with its ability] to employ the means available to compensate for what it lacks and improve its prosperity.... The general welfare of the nation includes the individual welfare of all citizens.... [Our] youths should be brought up as good members of the whole political society, as... noble members of not only their communities but their whole nation as well.⁴⁸

All in all, striving for one's own happiness turned out to be inextricably linked with the nation's happiness, thus helping the nation to attain "the great common good of mankind." Having started as a revolutionary, Seliminski, like Kogălniceanu, ended up as a mouthpiece of evolutionary liberalism. But his early liberalism, unlike Kogălniceanu's, was more classically individualistic and utilitarian than romantically nationalistic and conservative.

PART II: THE AGE OF MATURITY

Turns and Divisions

Given the legacy of the first half of the century, both institutional and intellectual, it is quite astonishing to see that, since their thunderous appearance on the political scene between the late 1840s and the early 1860s, the "liberal patriots" managed to remain there as major political actors, and in Romania and Bulgaria to pull the reins of power, for most of the time until World War I. In all three countries at issue, these largely foreign-educated intellectuals held the same belief: their states could progress only if they adopted the liberal political institutions of the "progressive" West. For them economic and social advancement, cultured society, and social harmony were predicated on the creation of a political environment whose main attributes would be national independence, representative government and civil rights.⁴⁹ Between the 1850s and the 1870s, this largely 'foreign' creed developed into a mature political theory. Its success in furnishing the institutional framework of the emerging national states and the sources for its diffused and lasting legacy deserve to be more closely examined.

⁴⁸ Seliminski, *Izbrani sčineniya*, 374–379.

⁴⁹ This association of economic advancement with the introduction of liberal institutions has led some analysts to assert that "[l]iberalism had thus emerged as a compensation for the economic backwardness" of these societies (Dušan Bataković, "Jevrem Grujić: obzori slobode," in *Liberalna misao u Srbiji*, 130).

Far from being eroded by the tension between popular sovereignty and individual liberty, it is precisely its association with nationalism and romanticism that explains Balkan liberalism's ideological attraction and mobilizing power. It did not emerge as and never became a philosophical or ethical strain of thought spurred by 'intrinsic' theoretical polemics. Its purpose, or *raison d'être*, was an activist, socially and politically 'constructivist' one. Its feats were achieved by virtue of apparent 'deviations' from the putative European 'archetypes.' For central to it was not the assault on social privilege and the defense of the 'natural' demands of rehabilitated individuals, even less *laissez-faire* economics and anticlericalism. Central to it was the projection of the individualistic notion of the natural rights onto the body of the national whole—the translation of personal freedom and civil rights into the right of each nationality to its own sovereign state and free development.

National liberalism, however, was neither a monolithic nor a static doctrine. Starting from the 1848 radicalization of the liberal nationalist projects, important shifts had occurred in the liberal-national balance and in interpretation that are intrinsic to the understanding of the nature and the impact of that strain of European liberalism. The second part of this sub-chapter will seek to demonstrate the different meanings of key liberal notions like "freedom" ("liberty," "liberation," "unification," "independence"), "nation" ("people," "nationality," "national tradition"), "democracy" ("popular representation," "popular sovereignty"), "progress," the role of history (and historical right) and Europe (and the West), as well as the different readings of the relations between them. These were meanings and interpretations that became a bone of contention between different streams of liberally minded Balkan modernizers.

Generally speaking, until as late as the 1860s, and in Bulgaria throughout the 1870s, the *Risorgimento* (national-romantic, revivalist) type of liberalism continued to prevail; however, its content changed. The 1848 revolutions had made painfully clear the zero-sum relationship between the various liberal-national projects, whereby a triumph for one was a defeat for another.⁵⁰ This loss of 'innocence' did not fully exterminate the previous liberal-romantic nationalist ardor or the hopes for solidarity between the national emancipatory movements. It did, however, alter the horizon of expectations and the policies of the post-1848 liberals. In the

⁵⁰ Balázs Trencsényi et al., *Negotiating Modernity: History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* (forthcoming).

following decades the universalist principle of individual liberty was gradually assimilated by increasingly assertive claims to collective rights, while social demands were subordinated to national ones.

This shift took place in two more or less consecutive phases. During the 1850s and 1860s, liberal nationalism grew increasingly political in aspirations and 'Mazzinist' in methods, while its prescriptive association with freedom, equality and "popular rule" became conceivable only within the framework of the free and unified nation-state. Those years also saw the peak of the movements for Italian and for German unification, the course and outcomes of which impacted the Balkan liberals' theoretical orientation and strategic choices. The liberals' rise to power in all three countries in the late 1860s and 1870s intensified the shift from radical emancipatory ideas towards more conservative and nationalist forms of liberalism. The positivist 'turn' of the 1860s and 1870s in all those countries did not undermine the national-romantic-liberal visions of society. Instead its progressive development towards internal and external freedom and self-fulfillment was now seen as ordained by objective laws rather than providence. But there was no clash between romantic and positivist national liberalisms of the type that had emerged around the same time elsewhere in Europe. Instead there was a fusion and a reinforcement of historicist romantic claims with positivist argumentation.

Consequently the major divisions within the liberal camp after 1848 ensued primarily from the increasing pressure coming from both the 'right' (ethno-cultural nationalism and conservatism, or traditionalism) and the 'left' (radical populism, democracy and socialism). Often these translated into clashes over the methods and the speed of the pursued transformation—in other words, into polemics between the revolutionary, or radical, and the evolutionary, or reformist, liberal currents, where attitudes to, as well as instrumentalization of, national history and tradition occupied a prominent place. This division was not necessarily of a social nature but could often originate from generational tensions, educational background, and even regional particularities. The different varieties of liberalism espoused in Wallachia and Moldavia are illuminating in this respect. Some analysts addressing the divergences in the national movements in the two principalities have tended to emphasize the importance of structural sociopolitical differences concerning the degrees of urbanization, the patterns of land ownership, and the mechanisms of elite formation. While the Moldavian elite was, and remained throughout the nineteenth century, predominantly nobility- and landowner-based, the Wallachian political class presented a more diversified picture,

with a bigger segment of those with some base in the urban sector of the economy and a middle-class orientation.⁵¹ Other analysts have paid more attention to the distinct historical and cultural traditions of the two provinces, which had resulted in disparate political and intellectual priorities.⁵² The moderate reformist strain in Romanian liberalism drew on the same “critical spirit” that informed modern Romanian conservatism and that was characteristic of Moldavian political culture before and after 1848.⁵³ Thus from its very inception, the Romanian liberal movement was marked by an ideological and elite cleavage, and a power contest, between radical-liberals and conservative-liberals, rooted in the sociocultural regional differences.

A similar division, *mutatis mutandis*, applied to the Bulgarian liberals, but for different reasons. Until 1878, when a national Bulgarian state was established, Bulgarian liberalism, unlike the Serbian or the Romanian ‘Habsburg’ branches, evolved entirely within the imperial Ottoman context, with no proper political entity across the border to streamline and guide its visions for national consolidation and unification. Under such conditions a deep internal schism emerged between the reformist, or evolutionist, liberal camp and the revolutionary, or secessionist, one. Despite the two groups’ similar stances on many issues, the division over the political goals of liberal reformism led to deep hostility between the two camps and left its strong imprint upon their respective interpretations of what came to constitute Bulgarian liberal thought. Significant social differences also underlay the split: there was a clear correspondence between the well-to-do merchant community based in Constantinople, benefiting from the empire’s increasing involvement in the international trade, and

⁵¹ Béla Borsi-Kálmán, *Nemzetfogalom és nemzetstratégiák. A Kossuth-emigráció és a román nemzeti törekvések kapcsolatának történetéhez* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), cited in Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi, “In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990–2000,” *East European Politics and Societies* 17 (2003), 425. Cf. Gheorghe Platon, Alexandru-Florin Platon, *Boierimea din Moldova în secolul al XIX-lea. Context european. Evoluție socială și politică* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1995).

⁵² Sorin Alexandrescu sees in this one of the “Romanian paradoxes”: the fact that the three Romanian provinces—Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania—were not only under the influence or domination of different historical civilizations but that they had never in their history come together under the sway of a single civilization: Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* (Bucharest: Univers, 1998), 32–34.

⁵³ Perhaps the earliest treatise on the evolution of Romanian culture along such divisions is Garabet Ibrăileanu, *Spiritul critic în cultura românească* (Bucharest: Viața Românească, 1908). See also Adrian Marino, “Din istoria teoriei ‘formă fără fond,’” *Anuar de lingvistică și istorie literară* 19 (Iași, 1968), 185–188.

the reformist (anti-revolutionary) wing, on the one hand, and the lower-middle-class émigrés, mostly free intellectuals, stationed in various Romanian cities, whose prospects for social climbing were closely linked to the prospect of erecting a national state, and the radical (militant) camp, on the other.

The position of the Serbian and Romanian liberals in Habsburg Vojvodina and Transylvania, respectively, in the second half of the century oscillated between programs for peaceful transformation and national unification. In the face of an increasingly self-confident Hungarian nationalism, since 1848 they had been pursuing not secession from but territorial autonomy within a confederate and constitutional Habsburg monarchy. The impact of Hungarian national liberalism on Transylvanian Romanian liberalism—or rather their constituting of each other (albeit asymmetrically)—was stronger than in the Serbian-Hungarian case, while the cross-border interaction between the Serbian liberals far exceeded, in the 1850s and especially the 1860s, that between the Romanians. Yet in each case, the very existence of Serbian and Romanian ‘mother states’ made their strategic choices and the character of their *irredenta* dependent on not only the imperial political reconfigurations and ideological shifts—which after the 1867 *Ausgleich* generally did not favor the subject nationalities—but also the political dynamics and transformations within their ‘home’ nation-states. The major division among the Serbian and the Romanian nationalists in Vojvodina and Transylvania was not one in the liberal ranks but between the liberals and the conservatives rallying the traditional, feudal leadership, the clergy, and the military bureaucracy.

In all three cases generational and educational factors played an important, sometimes decisive, role in defining the direction and internal dynamism of the respective national liberalism. The first generation of Serbian liberals until the 1850s, both inside and outside the principality, was trained almost exclusively in German universities, in the German historicist tradition and Hegelianism. Accordingly, their ideals, as we have seen, were legalistic and constitutional rather than emancipatory. The second generation, who took part in the 1848 upheaval and, during the late 1850s and the 1860s, developed Serbian liberalism into a major ideological current and political force, was above all inspired by French radical thought and British parliamentarism.⁵⁴ The radical-democratic ideology of the

⁵⁴ With candid admiration Stojan Bošković wrote: “We must learn from England—the mother of liberty and constitutionalism in the whole world” (cited in Milan S. Protić, *Uspori-*

Wallachian 1848-ers, with its affinity to French romantic nationalism, clashed with the organicist visions of the Moldavian conservative-liberal critics of radicalism and popular mobilization, inspired mainly by German evolutionism and historicism. Most of the early reformist strain of Bulgarian liberal nationalists were disciples of Greek schools, who made their plans for reform under the spell of late-Enlightenment political thought, while the majority of their followers in the second half of the century were Western-educated. The radical liberalism that escalated with the next generation was essentially cultivated by the dissident currents in Russian political thought—liberal-populist, radical, *narodnik*, Marxist.

Modernity as an Indigenous Phenomenon

In view of liberalism's novelty and 'foreignness' in the Balkan nineteenth-century context, the first question that arises is what means the liberals employed in order to make society accept and uphold such alien norms and institutions. The following section will try to answer this question by bringing out the process whereby liberalism, as both a political ideology and an institutional format, was subjected to local reinterpretations and adaptations. In a more general sense, these local 'hybridizations' can tell us a great deal about the transferability of a supposedly unique Western experience to societies with very different social and cultural backgrounds. In view of our focus, they can highlight the commonalities and entanglements—regional as well as European—underlying the process of political modernization.

The liberal method of 'domesticating' liberalism in the various countries in the region was akin to discursive expropriation: by indigenizing essential attributes of (Western) civilization, modernity came to prefigure as a local phenomenon. Liberals across the Balkans sought the endorsement of a modern concept of the state and legitimate rule—a concept they had borrowed from abroad, by extracting its norms from the archaic communitarian traditions of the pre-modern institutions of local self-government, ancient customs and the collective past. As an eminent student of nineteenth-century Serbia observed, the Serbian liberals, having discovered

i pad srpske ideje [Belgrade: SANU, 1994], 95). Slobodan Jovanović (1868–1958), the son of Vladimir, also emphasized the strong influence of English parliamentarism and the ideas of the French Left on not only his father but the whole first generation of Serbian liberals. See Slobodan Jovanović, *Moji savremenici* (Windsor, Canada: Avala, 1961–1962), 20–21, 28–29, 53; Slobodan Jovanović, *Iz istorije i književnosti*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1991), 550.

little foundation for 'Western-type' modernity in their contemporary societies, turned to national history in "search of the rudiments of the Western liberal institutions, [presenting] our whole democratic movement as the return of our people to its historical character."⁵⁵ Serbia's capacity to exercise political modernity, the Serbian liberals contended, resided in its traditional representative and democratic institutions. It was these institutions, according to their claim, that embodied the genuine nature of the national past. The liberals' mission was to bring these archaic institutions back to life; their goal was to show that they were the bearers, or revivers, of a more authentic tradition than the one of the 'supreme elder' or the class of privileged.

It was Vladimir Jovanović, the chief ideologist of Serbian liberalism and a personal acquaintance of leading English liberals like William Gladstone and Richard Cobden (as well as of Giuseppe Mazzini, Alexander Herzen and Mikhail Bakunin), who set out to prove the Serbs' age-old and inborn affinity for freedom and democracy.⁵⁶ If, throughout their history, the Serbs had remained "one against the foreign domination and any sort of domestic oppression; one in origin and language, in social habits, in national feeling, in literature, and in all the qualities and energies which constitute its identity," it was because they were drawing on the "conviction that all men are created equal, that all men and nations have equal natural rights," and that these rights were "inviolable under any circumstances." Jovanović elaborated on the whole set of popular Serbian institutions, mores and traditions that nurtured this quintessentially modern conviction.

The sentiment of the national freedom and independence, which is indelibly engraved in the hearts of the Serbs, has led them to perpetuate their fellow-feeling by a peculiar institution, such as *Pobratimstvo*. It is a sacred union between the Serbs of various families, founded upon a resolution of reciprocal self-sacrifice . . . in struggling for national and human liberty and independence. The enlightenment of the mass, which ought to result from

⁵⁵ Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. 1 (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1934), 44.

⁵⁶ The liberal theory of Serbian history was most fully developed by Jovanović in *The Serbian Nation and the Eastern Question*, published first in English, in 1863, in London, and translated and published the same year in Serbian in Novi Sad and Belgrade. In the book's preface Jovanović makes explicit his intention: "As a Serb I will try to highlight the maturity of the Serbian people for a close bond with their liberal (free-thinking) brethren as this maturity is reflected in the Serbs' history and political life": "Srbski narod i istočno pitanje," in Vladimir Jovanović, *Za slobodu i narod* (Novi Sad, 1868), 54–90 (54), cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 491.

the equality of rights, has always been and still is supported among the Serbs by the traditional institutions of the *Slava* and the *Sabori* . . . , all serving to a continual exchange of ideas, experiments and useful knowledge. . . .⁵⁷

This deep-seated sense of solidarity, equity and accord was transferred from kin institutions like the *zadruga* (extended family) to the different levels of traditional self-government, whereby "all members of a rural community or a county or a district or the whole land work for a common goal." The main incubator for democratic citizenship, and a precursor of the modern representative government, was the communal assemblies. "The municipal and local self-government is derived from the equality of rights, which is the basis of the democracy," noted Jovanović.

The traditional municipal institutions of the Serbs are free. In its relations with the state the Serbian commune—*Obshtina*, as tradition knows it, is entirely independent. . . . The Serbian national assembly in its traditional form insures the government of the people by the people equally represented, which is essential in a democracy. To be better understood we add that the national assembly in its form of the traditional and sacred institution is sovereign with a government for its chief officers, so as to preserve for the people the direct control of their own destinies. . . . To the equality of rights, so deeply rooted in the public spirit and incorporated into the traditional institutions of the Serbs, corresponds the equality of duties.⁵⁸

Consequently the Serbian liberals' aspiration was the "free arrangement of our state institutions in a popular and democratic spirit, in accordance with the historical precepts . . . [which] have existed for centuries in the life of our people."⁵⁹

Constitutionalism and representative government were thus directly distilled from the ancient traditions and institutions of popular democracy testifying to the maturity of the Serbs for modernity. Individual freedom

⁵⁷ Vladimir Yovanovitch, *The Emancipation and Unity of the Serbian Nation or the Regeneration of Eastern Europe by the Reconstitution of the Nationalities* (Geneva: H. Georg; London: Trilbner & C^o, 1871), 103–121.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Jovanović was not the only liberal who argued along such lines. "The Popular Assembly is one of the most ancient and sacred institutions in the Serbian Principality. It embodies the lawful will of the whole Serbian people," read the liberal draft of the National Assembly Law of 1858. The common law of the assembly, claimed its author Grujić, was the basis of all institutions in the country and a "requirement" for the life of the people: *Zapisi Jevrema Grujića*, vol. 2, 99.

⁵⁹ Cited in Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 91. Some present-day authors maintain that in this way the Serbian liberals had "succeeded in reconciling the local interests (peasant self-rule, communal organization) and the political aspirations of the peasant population with the general principles of parliamentarism of a Western type" (Bataković, Jevrem Grujić, 129).

and freedom of the people, equality before the law and the sense of solidarity and association were not values alien to the Serb. On the contrary, they were part of the Serbian past and were preserved as ideals by the 'popular spirit' throughout the ages of foreign domination. "The old or the genuine organization of the Serbian state was democratic, i.e. it meant that the people governed themselves on the basis of equality before the law and the equal rights of all its members," Jovanović argued.⁶⁰ Everything that was undemocratic and autocratic was the result of foreign influence—Byzantine, Turkish or Russian. Two conclusions could be drawn from this. First, any system of government that was upholding these values—and liberalism was precisely such a system—meant a return to an authentic national condition to be brought about by the liberals themselves: "The United Serbian Youth [the main organization of the Serbian liberals set up in 1866] is the true expression of the public national spirit, which carries in it all moral bases of the civic virtues."⁶¹ Second, the perennial fight of the Serbs against foreign occupants was a fight of democracy against despotism.⁶²

The key concepts and historical references used by the Bulgarian liberals around the same time were remarkably similar:

The Bulgarian people, by its nature and communal institutions, by its customs and recollections of the past, is purely and sincerely democratic; the Bulgarians, more than any other European people, are alien to the spirit of castes and [all kinds of social inequality]... Among them there exist no such hierarchies: they are all noble or all estate-less citizens, but first and foremost—they are all equal since all are Bulgarians, the sons of the same fatherland.⁶³

In the 1870 manifesto of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committee, its leader, Lyuben Karavelov (1835–1879), argued that "[since] the Bulgarian people is a democratic people... we wish to see in our fatherland an elected government which will fulfill the will of the people itself."⁶⁴ As in Serbia, the archaic self-governing commune came to embody not only the traditions of solidarity, equality and fraternity but, remarkably, developed

⁶⁰ Jovanović, *Osnovi snage*, 50.

⁶¹ Cited in Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 141–142.

⁶² Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 498.

⁶³ Ivan Kasabov in *Narodnost* 2, no. 14, February 23, 1869.

⁶⁴ Cited in *Planove i programi v natsionalnoosvoboditelno to dvizhenie prez Văzrazhdaneto*, eds. Georgi Pletnyov, Ivan Stoyanov (VelikoTărnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodiy, 1994), 84.

forms of collective *and* individual freedom of the kind that 'Europe' was trying hard to attain.

But how surprised our readers will be when we tell them that that for which people are fighting in Europe exists among us whole, complete and ready, awaiting hands and minds to yield the desired fruits of a fast and comprehensive progress. The individual, that is the self-feeling, which has always supplied the Bulgarian with an independent spirit, is so strongly developed among us as to have no match in any other Slavic or foreign race.⁶⁵

Thus, by drawing on a genuine liberal model *avant la lettre*, the 'late-comers,' like the Bulgarians, could skip a few evolutionary 'stages' and find themselves ahead of the forerunners.

Similar logic underpinned the liberals' version of the idea of property. As an attribute of full citizenship, it was present in all liberal programs, yet its underpinnings in both Serbia and Bulgaria were emphatically egalitarian.

The Serbs are so deeply penetrated by the sentiments of equality and fraternity, as never to be reconciled with any sort of unjust and hereditary distinctions among men. Equality is materially insured among the Serbs by respect of property. . . . Instead of a few thousand proprietors, there are many hundred thousand . . . and all sort of aristocratic and noble-man's privileges, which might serve to a concentration of fortunes into the hands of a small number, are impossible in Serbia. Wealth is in general equitably distributed among the Serbs, so as to ensure that nobody may be rich enough to purchase another, and nobody so poor as to sell himself. Pauperism is entirely unknown in Serbia . . . Every Serb delights to be able to prove that "All is ours, all is *narodsko*" [belonging to the whole of the nation].⁶⁶

During the debates in the Bulgarian Constitutional Assembly, when they championed the unfettered self-expression of the people and opposed any privileging of those better prepared for government, the liberals cited the classless social structure and ethos of the Bulgarian nation. Thus Serbia and Bulgaria, by virtue of both their democratic habits and traditional socioeconomic structure (a massive 'peasant middle class' of sorts) inherently averse to privilege and social injustice, were avowed to be organically suited for the norms of political modernity.

The same sensibilities made the liberals in both countries strongly sensitive to the facts of misery and degradation of the poor as the underside

⁶⁵ Petko R. Slaveykov, "Gradovete i selata edni za drugi" (1869), in Petko R. Slaveykov, *Săchineniia v osem toma*, vol. 6 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1980), 336.

⁶⁶ Jovanović, *The Emancipation and Unity*.

of free-market capitalism, which they had encountered either directly during their stays abroad or through the Western critical social literature proliferating at the time. For them the people were a *natio*, a community of blood and language, not a 'plebs,' a poor, inferior and wretched stratum of society. As the repository of national history and identity, its institutions and morality had to be preserved. In Serbia it was the *zadruga* and the social ethos it nurtured which became the major point of reference in the liberals' social philosophy. That this ancient communal institution was disintegrating under the pressure of the new socioeconomic environment was obvious to everyone. Even so, the Serbian liberals maintained, throughout its long existence it had imbued the Serb with a deep sense of solidarity and community, which at the same time harmonized with the idea of *sabornost* cultivated by the Serbian Orthodox Church and fusing community of faith, love and individual freedom. All this preordained the Serbs to pursue and sustain social harmony—a harmony which the free capitalist market threatened with extinction.⁶⁷ Between solidarity, concord and freedom, according to Jovanović, there was a close link, and "only they can turn a country into a paradise." Hence the liberals' highly selective attitude to Western liberal economic thinking: they adopted the positivist principle of social harmony but rejected the free-market orientation. Generally, they cast doubt on the universality of Western economic reasoning about free competition, not only on account of its being in favor of the 'rich nations' but also because the conditions and needs of the different nations were different and changed with time. As Jovanović argued, "there cannot be a common model of economy, just as there cannot be a dress that would fit everyone. A baby-walker and an old man's crutch would be the heaviest chains for grown-up and healthy people."⁶⁸

In the political language of liberal nationalism in Serbia and Bulgaria, therefore, 'liberal ideas' (and modernity) and popular ('national') tradition were not mutually exclusive. How much actual power the Serbian and the Bulgarian liberals were ready to entrust to the 'democratic instinct' of their respective peoples will be discussed later. But it seems safe to assume that, at the time when the above statements were made, the bulk of the liberals genuinely believed in their peoples' 'special proclivities' for democracy, representative government and social harmony, not least because many among them did not, or could not, distinguish between

⁶⁷ Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 328–329.

⁶⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, 330.

democracy and egalitarianism or political representation and communitarian custom. (Such distinctions, as we shall see, were characteristic of the later, more elitist generation of Balkan liberals, such as the Bulgarian 'Conservatives' and the Serbian Progressives.) Their effort to prove that representative rule was the true national tradition and that their program was an authentic expression of the national spirit, all this struggle for the 'mind of the nation,' was in fact a struggle to legitimize a modern view of power, and those who held it, through tradition and patriarchal custom. There they searched for concepts that could energize the inert peasant population and convince their co-nationals not only to accept but to join their movement.⁶⁹

Herein lies the ambiguity of and the inherent tension in Serbian and Bulgarian liberal thought. It was not the old patriarchal arrangement preserved by the 'popular spirit' that the liberals in these countries wanted to reinstall. They were not traditionalists in any accepted meaning of the term: tradition for them was not an alternative to modernity, not even a *sui generis* alternative modernity. For them it was only the basis from which the viable institutions and guiding principles of the nation-states could evolve. Serbian and Bulgarian liberalisms, like Romanian liberalism, were instances of what a later-day observer called the "modernism of underdevelopment": through a synthesis between tradition and modernity, liberals hoped to 'condense' the historical time needed for the implantation of modern forms of social organization, economic and political freedom in particular, and most of all the nation-state.⁷⁰ The search for such a synthesis distinguished the mid-nineteenth century liberals from the romantic-conservative Slavophiles, who criticized modernity precisely because they deemed it incompatible with the Slavs' spiritual and social experience. It also distinguished them from the next, post-revivalist generation of liberals, who regarded it as a romantic delusion to assert that by introducing parliamentarism the nation was simply returning to its roots. "By fusing Westernism and nationalism, the liberals professed their faith in both Western education and national history, modern European democracy

⁶⁹ Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, xiii–xiv, 195, *passim*. Years later V. Jovanović justified this national romanticism—the exaltation of the Serbian past and the stress on the virtues of the patriarchal-collectivist life of the Serbian village—with the need to bolster national self-awareness: "If we wanted to become part of the great national movement that then pervaded Europe, we had to awaken our people—a dormant people had nothing to hope for." (Slobodan Jovanović, *Moji savremenici—Vladimir Jovanović* [Windsor, Canada: Avala, 1961], 32).

⁷⁰ Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 156.

and ancient Slav patriarchal order. In their program, democratic rationalism and romantic conservatism were knit together.”⁷¹ The liberal nationalists of the nineteenth-century Balkans could thus legitimate their project as universal and rational (that is, ‘European’ and modern) on the one hand, and local and ‘patrimonial,’ drawing upon the intrinsic social and psychological characteristics of the community, on the other.

Despite their divergent social profile, the Romanian liberals were just as eager to trace the fundamental liberal principles back not to the Western canon of ideas, from where they were actually taken, but to the traditions and values of the national past. For as the leading Moldavian liberal, Michail Kagălniceanu, pointed out, “The real civilization is the one that derives from our bosom, by reforming and improving the institutions of the past with the ideas and successes of the present.”⁷²

In his aforementioned “The Course of Revolution in the History of the Romanians” (1850), Nicolae Bălcescu set out to prove that, first, revolution sprang from the Romanian historical tradition and, second, the Romanians’ inherent love for liberty was part and parcel of their world mission. For eighteen centuries, he wrote, “the Romanian nation . . . has been moving forward, changing and fighting ceaselessly . . . for the accomplishment, both within and through all of mankind, of justice and brotherhood, those two essential pillars of absolute and perfect order, of God’s order.” The Romanian peasant’s pre-modern democratic traditions and his ancient freedom prescribed Romania’s road to political emancipation (or, in Bălcescu’s terms, democratization) and national integration on the basis of equality of rights (or abolition of what he called the “servitude of the masses”). As a result, the national revolution was presented as both progressive and a return to the national traditions.⁷³ Dumitru Brătianu (1818–1892), another radical-liberal of the 1848 generation, wrote in 1851 in the same vein:

For nearly eighteen centuries, we have been suffering, laboring and fighting in silence, without forgetting for a moment that we are entitled to represent in Eastern Europe the idea of individual freedom and collective progress, which make us Europeans and real forebears of humanism, that we are the vanguard of the Graeco-Latin race . . . Never, not even in our most inauspicious days, have we been shaken in our vocation to humanity.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, I, 44–45.

⁷² Cited in Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 122.

⁷³ Bălcescu, *Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor*, 467.

⁷⁴ Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*, 79–80. Cf. Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 45–46,

Thus, from being disciples of the West, the Romanians turned into its defenders and, finally, its forebears. Once the guardians of Christian Europe, now they stood as the guardians of democratic Europe, progenitors of the European civilization in the East, a European model for the other Balkan nations that had set out on the road to their revival.

Even pragmatic politicians, such as the liberal leader and prime minister Ion C. Brătianu, saw themselves compelled to frequently and passionately refer to a certain primordial, continuous model shaped by the Romanian past in order to excavate from it the elements of the liberal doctrine. The Romans who had settled in ancient Dacia, Brătianu affirmed, had kept the republican spirit alive. Much like the emigrant English Puritans, “the democratic and freedom-loving population of Italy, in order to free itself from the fiscal yoke, from the abuses of the privileged, and from the threats that it would lose its land, took up a plough in one hand and a sword in the other and set out to raise the pillar of liberty in a new land, a young and strong land, away from the stinking air of despotism.” It was in the midst of these new Roman colonies that “democratic traditions were kept up sacred and pure.” The Romanian nation thus “not only has its mind and spirit ready for democracy... [it] has continuously carried [democracy] in its heart and customs.”⁷⁵ Nicolae Bălcescu described Romanian medieval society as built upon democratic and egalitarian principles: the Romanian nation, according to him, rested upon the ancient triad of boyars, peasants and soldiers, each of which was endowed with the right to property and to carry arms.⁷⁶ As for the representative institutions, argued Ion C. Brătianu, it should be remembered that “Romania has its own past, and while other states were under the sway of despotism, here we had a regime... [which was] all too liberal and, one may say, parliamentary.” The revolution in this sense was fought not for abstract human rights, but for the restoration of a pre-existing tradition, which, albeit suppressed, had been latent in Romania for eighteen centuries. Even specific legal acts, such as the law on the local government, were advertised as the revival of an old Roman tradition—“one of our ancient

49–50. Critical historians such as M. Kogălniceanu were no more immune from temptation to look for a privileged position of Romania in European history.

⁷⁵ Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, vol. 1, part 1 (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1938), 21–22.

⁷⁶ Nicolae Bălcescu, *Românii sub Mihai Vodă Viteazul* (Iași: Junimea, 1988), 14.

institutions”—that had been “salvaging” Romanians for centuries until “foreign rulers came and destroyed it.”⁷⁷

This train of thought could have fit nicely into some of Vladimir Jovanović’s treatises on the organic democratism of the Serbs. Once more, here was a line of argument aimed at indigenizing the exogenous (democratism in particular) and legitimating a modern concept of the state by way of tradition and ancient custom. What the liberals meant by tradition had nothing to do with the experience bequeathed by centuries of political decline; they meant the Romanians’ original ethnic essence, on the basis of which the ‘democratic institutions’ of medieval Romania could be built.

The liberal solution, therefore—the one that was closer than any other to the Western bourgeois model—“was presented, almost point by point as the re-actualization of a transfigured past” that ended with the late Middle Ages and the subjection of the ‘nation’ to a (corrupting) foreign rule.⁷⁸ But the Romanian liberals’ inflated invention and redefinition of the national traditions and collective moral core, much like that of the Serbian and the Bulgarian liberals, did not serve to celebrate an indigenist project. It was meant to bring their societies closer to the West and be accepted as equal members of the European family of states. By claiming continuity with ancient freedom, Romania came to stand out as a stronghold of Western civilization and democratic political culture. The national history of the last few centuries had been an aberration, a historical accident, whose elimination would bring their country to where it naturally belonged. For this was a case not of borrowing but of the reunion of two similar structures that shared the same European origin. This tradition, located in ancient and medieval times, was not a victim of modernization but rather its starting point and fertile base.⁷⁹

Political liberalism everywhere in the Balkans was a hybrid of Western prototypes and indigenous romantic populism drawing upon the glorification of the tradition of popular democracy.⁸⁰ In order to gain legitimacy and support, the liberal nation-state had to develop naturally from the true but long-suppressed essence of the national past. History in that scheme

⁷⁷ Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvîntări*, vol. 8 (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1941), 178; vol. 4 (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1932), 31.

⁷⁸ Boia, *History and Myth*, 46.

⁷⁹ Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice românești*, 84–85. For more on the legitimizing functions of the Romanian liberals’ references to a “liberal-democratic” historical tradition, see Mishkova, *Prisposobiavane na svobodata*, 131–141.

⁸⁰ Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, *passim*.

was consigned two crucial tasks: to provide testimony that, despite all obstacles, successful modernization was possible; and to propel national integration—a major goal (and a problem) for the liberals ever since 1848. History thus became the continuous presence of liberal politics.⁸¹ It might appear paradoxical at first sight that such imperative references to the past were made by those who sought to break away from it. But in fact, for the liberals this past, and the interest in history generally, was called upon to serve a present- and future-oriented goal: to supply a historical model that was attuned to the necessities and ideals of the present and which showed the nation's ability to progress and modernize. Their reverence for and the role they assigned to the archaic institutions, therefore, was not a past- but a future-oriented utopianism.

This double function of history—on the one hand, to assert cultural and institutional continuity and provide insight into the national character and, on the other, to chart the way to the future—is nicely captured by Mihail Kogălniceanu:

Let our guiding book be Romanian history, let it be the palladium of our nationality. Through it we are going to learn what we did and what we have to do, through it we are going to see our future, through it we are becoming Romanians. Because history is the measure which helps to differentiate which nation is progressing and which is lagging behind. Therefore ask history and you will learn who we are, where we come from and where we are going.⁸²

Petko R. Slaveykov displayed the same attitude when stating that “without historical knowledge there is no national consciousness, no national feeling, no national pride, without them everything remains dead and deaf,” but also adding, “only where there is development is there history.”⁸³ This is how the apparent paradox of embedding the (revolutionizing) liberal nationalist discourse in historical-institutional continuity (even in cases where the state tradition was fully obliterated, as in Bulgaria and Serbia) becomes conceivable. The future-oriented past made it possible for the Balkan liberals to legitimate the need for change in the present by

⁸¹ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 380.

⁸² Cited in Monica Baar, *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 55.

⁸³ Slaveykov, *Săchineniia*, vol. 6, 27, 232. That history served to not only sustain national memory but chart the “craved” national space—another of its future-oriented aspects—can be confirmed by the writings of Bălcescu, Kogălniceanu, Slaveykov, Miletić, Polit-Desančić and many other national liberals.

claiming to be restoring the normative ancient tradition, and to portray the movement toward modernity as a reconstitution of the original values of society.

The actual possibility of a synthesis between tradition and modernity in the way proposed by the nineteenth-century Balkan liberals poses a number of interesting questions which cannot be adequately resolved here. However, one aspect—the revolutionary role assigned to ‘political ideals’—should be mentioned, since it highlights the rationalist-positivist logic that led them to envisage such a possibility in the first place, and since it constituted a central issue of contention between the radical and the moderate strands. It was perhaps most clearly articulated by the Romanian liberals, whose selection of historical references and precedents was led by an aspiration for recreating and ‘reviving’ an essentially modern context synchronic with the Western European one. Their entire ideology and politics proceeded from the conviction that any profound progressive change, above all, modernization in general, in ‘young nations’ could unfold in one direction only: from the idea towards the reality, from form towards substance, from the elite towards the mass of the people. When conservative leader Petre P. Carp expressed in detail his regret that “democratization in this country takes place top down instead of bottom up,” one of the liberals’ chief figures and a former 1848-er, Constantin A. Rosetti (1816–1885), replied: “During my whole life I have been saying and shall say again that revolutions should take place top down, and not bottom up.”⁸⁴ The sweeping modernization of the political sphere, which had started in all three Balkan countries with the adoption and implementation of new legislative norms, followed a correspondingly crude but lucid syllogism: first and foremost, necessarily, must be the building of the modern state and institutional forms which, in turn and through conscious policies, should ‘educate’ and transform society. ‘Tradition,’ or rather its instrumentalization, was bound to play a key role in the process; it resembled not so much an invention, but a revaluation or novel combination of existing social forms by endowing them with a new meaning.

To be sure, the indigenizing of ‘freedom’ as a traditional, pre-modern phenomenon was not a Balkan specialty. The nineteenth-century historians among the French ‘doctrinaires’ and the British Whigs had searched for the original source of freedom and equality amidst the tribes inhabiting the German and Frankish forests, thus cultivating the belief that

⁸⁴ Cited in Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 149.

liberalism and its institutions were an intrinsic part of the Western historical experience and view of the world. According to Gale Stokes, Vladimir Jovanović modeled his interpretation of Serbian history—a model which was adopted and developed further by other liberal intellectuals—on the Whig theory of English history. In more recent studies on nineteenth-century Serbian liberalism, this opinion has been echoed.⁸⁵ Considering Jovanović's close acquaintance with the British liberal tradition, including in historiography, this opinion appears plausible. But the fact that similar theories emerged in contexts with dissimilar historical legacies and liberal models, like those of the Romanians and the Bulgarians, seems instead to suggest the existence of a common dilemma emanating from these societies' initial wide-ranging encounter with modernity, which forced the liberal revolutionaries to translate and adapt the 'imported' modernity in the aforementioned way. For a political program to command plausibility and legitimacy, Quentin Skinner tells us, it should fit in the "prevailing morality" of the society. "However revolutionary the ideologist may be, he will nevertheless be committed, once he has accepted the need to legitimate his behavior, to attempting to show that some of the *existing* range of favorable evaluative-descriptive terms can somehow be applied as apt descriptions of his own apparently untoward actions. Every revolutionary is to this extent obliged to march backward into battle."⁸⁶

In all three cases the Janus-face of the official liberal doctrines and praxis was obvious. While presiding over a massive import of 'inorganic' foreign institutions that destroyed the traditional rural cultures, the liberals in Serbia, Bulgaria and Romania sought to carve out 'normative national pasts' from the pre-modern symbolic world of the 'national' peasantry. On the one hand, Balkan liberals agreed that modernity had no alternative; on the other, modernity was allegedly foreshadowed in a variety of early local traditions. In the ensuing uneasy 'negotiation' between these two positions, liberal political discourse fused with nationalist symbolic language, and the modernization project with organicist elements. This fusion would open the door to re-interpreting key liberal concepts in ways that often made them potentially more nationalist than liberal.

⁸⁵ Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, 57–58; Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 498–499.

⁸⁶ Quentin Skinner, "Some Problems in the Analysis of Political Thought and Action," *Political Theory* 2 (1974): 295–296 (italics added).

A Battlefield of Ideals

In nineteenth-century Europe rationality, liberty, individuality, controlled power and progress were core liberal values that conferred political identity on their adherents. But, as Michael Freeden has argued, they came in various internal combinations and proportions, while adjacent and peripheral concepts, ideas and practices gave specific meanings to these core concepts. "The struggle among the liberal contenders and pretenders is over the legitimacy of one conceptual combination as against another. It is a battle for monopolizing liberal political language, enacted both in the arenas of national and international politics and in the campuses of political philosophers."⁸⁷

Continuities and Novelities

Arguably, generational shifts played a significant role in such rivalries. The political 'appeals' of Constantin A. Rosetti immediately after the 1848 revolution, seeking to fuse the natural right of the individual to liberty and equality with a notion of the 'people' à la Jules Michelet, were characteristic of the Risorgimento type of national-democratic liberalism that came to prevail in the 1830s and 1840s. "God created everybody in His likeness. Every man was born free. . . . Every human being is entitled to the same rights and claims," Rosetti maintained while making, in the same stroke, an *argumentum ad populum*: "Even the most enlightened personalities are doomed to inertia and sterility unless they merge completely with the people. . . . "What are the people?—Nothing. What do they have to become?—Everything."⁸⁸ In the discourse of the 1848-ers, individual freedom was typically veiled in nationalist messianism and populism. It was, at the same time, vitally connected to the necessity and inevitability of progress, where the direction of the *Zeitgeist* and the will of divine providence frequently coalesced. For Nicolae Bălcescu, revolution was "a natural, necessary, foreseen historical evolution of the providential movement that takes the Romanian nation, together with all of mankind, on the infinite path of progressive, regular development, towards the highest goal that God hides from us and where He awaits us."⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Freeden, "European Liberalisms," 12–13.

⁸⁸ Constantin A. Rosetti, "Apel la toate partidele" (1850), cited in C. A. Rosetti, *Gînditorul, Omul*, ed. Radu Pantazi (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969), 157, 168, 208. Cf. Jules Michelet, *Le Peuple* (Paris: GF Flammarion, 1974; first published 1846).

⁸⁹ Bălcescu, *Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor*, 467.

Remarkably, the positivist generation of Balkan national-liberal revolutionaries did not break off this 'populist romance.' The followers of S. Miletić, V. Jovanović, I.C. Brătianu and L. Karavelov continued to cherish the romantic vision of the metaphysically complete, 'accomplished' nation which their revolutionary ideology was calling from the 'world of the shadows' and which they regarded as intrinsic to humanism and progress. Personal perfection and the advancement of society, they asserted, were inextricably linked with the nation. For Vladimir Jovanović nationality was "a stage in the approaching of universal brotherhood," while national freedom and advancement were "freedom and advancement for the whole humanity."⁹⁰ Ion C. Brătianu saw nationality as a "sine qua non for the civilizing [of Eastern Europe]," a "natural and constitutive element of humankind, and therefore absolutely necessary for its development."⁹¹

This combined faith in nation, freedom and progress was now underwritten by a faith in science or, as a student of Serbian liberalism put it, the faith in "the *nation* capable of political *freedom* with the help and the application of *science*."⁹² The emblematic motto of the Omladina (the Serbian Youth movement) was "from education towards freedom." For Karavelov, Jovanović and many other Young Serbs and Bulgarians, "spreading science among the people" was indispensable for the creation of a free democratic society, which they saw as the only one capable of progressing toward European civilization and ensuring the prosperity of all its members. And since no sharp distinction was drawn between science and ideology, "no difference was made between political ideals and scientific truths: what was rational in the political ideals gave them the appearance of scientific truth."⁹³ The Balkan liberals' national and political optimism—their trust in the applicability and viability of the liberal values and structures—rested on their scientism.

Many of these themes are easy to place into a broader intellectual and political setting which bridged not only the romantic and the positivist liberal strains but also these two generations of defiant Balkan nationalists. The liberal-democratic thought and revolutionary practice of the

⁹⁰ Yovanovitch, *The Emancipation and Unity of the Serbian Nation*, 124.

⁹¹ Ion C. Brătianu, "Naționalitatea" (1853), in *Gîndirea românească în epoca pașoptistă, 1830–1860*, part 1, eds. Paul Cornea and Mihai Zamfir (Bucharest: Editura pentru Literatură, 1969), 472.

⁹² Subotić, *Sricanje slobode*, 146.

⁹³ Slobodan Jovanović, "Vladimir Jovanović," in Jovanović, *Moji savremenici*, 20–21, cited in Dušan Bataković, "Vladimir Jovanović—apostol liberalizma u Srbiji," in *Liberalna misao*, 156.

'Young Europe' movements supplied the characteristic ideological and organizational coordinates of this markedly transnational milieu. Mazzini, emblematically, argued that liberal rights became accessible only when the (ethno-cultural) nation was granted democratic internal organization—"the only logical and truly legitimate form of Government" in modern times.⁹⁴ The Young movements thus tried to strike a balance between liberal commitment to universal basic rights and the humans' innate need to unite on the basis of "language, territory and ethnicity." Universal aspirations toward human freedom, equality and international peace could best be realized through independent nation-states endowed with democratic institutions.

This set of ideas provided a common frame of reference for the post-1848 generation of Balkan national liberals and the basis for their practical collaboration within the 'Young Europe' network and between themselves. The collaboration in question, as underlying or adding to the ideological connections to be discussed later, was a characteristic feature of the democratic national movements in the 1850s and the 1860s that were set upon overturning the post-1849 status quo. It was most conspicuous and consequential between the Serbian and the Bulgarian revolutionary liberal leaders, particularly Lyuben Karavelov, Svetozar Miletić and, to a somewhat lesser extent, Vladimir Jovanović. Karavelov was in fact a member of the Omladina and the living link between Miletić's National Liberal Party and the Bulgarian Secret Revolutionary Committee located in Bucharest and founded by Karavelov himself. Due to the relatively lax political climate, especially after the liberals came close to power in 1866, the Romanian principalities served as the base and springboard for the subversive actions of the Bulgarian nationalists—revivalists and revolutionaries alike. But, similar to the connections between the Serbian and the Romanian national-liberal movements in the Dual Monarchy, the Bulgarian-Romanian relationship, despite ideological affinity, practical support and programmatic similarities, did not evolve into as strong an interaction and exchanges as those which came to characterize the Bulgarian-Serbian liaison—a fact that also shows on the level of liberal doctrine, as we shall shortly see. Slav solidarity, anti-elitism and direct exposure to the perils of the Eastern question seem to account variably for

⁹⁴ Stefano Recchia and Nadia Urbinati, eds., *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations: Giuseppe Mazzini's Writings on Democracy, Nation Building, and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 97.

this difference. It is noteworthy at the same time that Serbian liberalism in Austria-Hungary and in the 'mother state' was largely a unified project unfolding around common themes and geared toward common goals—much more so than Romanian liberalism, marked as it was by considerable historical and sociocultural differences between the 'Old Kingdom' and Transylvania. The largest nationalist organization of the Serbs from the two sides of the border, the Omladina, was controlled by the liberals. This personal and ideational entanglement peaked between 1864 and 1869, when many exiled liberals from the Serbian principality found refuge in southern Hungary. Until the late 1860s all these movements, moreover, participated in Mazzini's broad international revolutionary network and thus in the transfer of ideas and policies. Predictably, all these relationships had multifaceted ideological and organizational effects but—most importantly perhaps—they helped temporarily obscure the tensions inherent in the belief that democratic nation-states could eliminate conflict between them.

Such continuities notwithstanding, there were also important differences between the early national-romantic Balkan liberalism and the one that followed it. When making plans for social transformation, the pre-1848 liberals referred to universal human nature, so for them the problem was how to apply the terminology of modern Western European political thought to the very different social structures that characterized their societies. The gravest challenge they saw themselves facing was that of convincing the 'people' of the necessity for political emancipation and mobilizing them toward its achievement. The next revolutionary generation, less enchanted by the image of the abstract individual and more skeptical of the viability of supranational 'natural rights,' based its model of development on autochthonous traditions. This implied not only reinterpretations of history and reconfigurations of tradition of the kind discussed above, but important shifts in the political vocabulary or, more properly, its semantics. These shifts drew inspiration from other strains of European thought and other liberal thinkers, foremost among whom were John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, Herbert Spencer and Benjamin Constant, as well as Auguste Comte, Charles Darwin, John William Draper and Henry Thomas Buckle.

"Inner" and "Outer" Freedom. Individual and Collective Rights

A common feature of post-1848 Balkan liberalisms, and one that spearheaded the liberals' battle to monopolize political language, was the

coupling of liberal-democratic domestic order (“inner freedom”) and national independence (“outer freedom”), of individual and national liberty. “Personal freedom and popular freedom” was a common expression in Karavelov’s and many other Bulgarian liberals’ vocabulary. The connection was evocatively captured by V. Jovanović: “Freedom is what makes man a human being; freedom is a natural and eternal right of man . . . personal, economic and political freedom, external freedom and national independence . . .”⁹⁵ Drawing on the theory of natural law each nationality was entitled to the ‘natural right’ of a sovereign state: “all men are created equal, all men and nations have equal natural rights, and a nation’s right to a separate and independent existence is inviolable under any circumstances.”⁹⁶ The implementation of this right, as we have seen, was *the* necessary condition for the implementation of the liberal idea of freedom and releasing the full potential of each nation (and thus of mankind). “All that is holy, dear and necessary for a single person,” Karavelov wrote, “is also necessary and essential for an entire nation. Only a nation possessing external and internal freedom, that is political independence and spiritual independence, can live and progress.”⁹⁷

The realization of this ‘right,’ however, was not enough. “But we have to take care of constitutional freedom as well; the latter is the same lodestar for us as nationality is; we will not want to ensure our nationality at the expense of liberty . . . We are Serbs and citizens,” Miletić explained.⁹⁸ Where the government was representative of and acted on behalf of the sovereign people, where monarchic power was limited and personal rights and freedoms were safeguarded—only there was the state “internally free.” For Karavelov, on the other hand, inner freedom implied not only controlled power and liberal institutions but the entitlement of each nationality to “rule itself according to its proper rights and customs and to protect its language and identity from foreign influence.”⁹⁹ Finally, domestic freedom was not simply a value by itself. It was typically seen as ensuring the ‘external’ unity and greatness of the nation: “only a Serbia endowed with free political institutions is capable of drawing together all Serbs under foreign rule; only in such a Serbia can that spirit of national

⁹⁵ Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 548; Vladimir Jovanović, *Srbenda i gotovan* (Novi Sad, 1864), 15–16.

⁹⁶ Yovanovitch, *The Emancipation and Unity of the Serbian Nation*, 103.

⁹⁷ *Svoboda* 1, no. 1, November 7, 1869.

⁹⁸ Cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 401.

⁹⁹ *Libertatea* 3, January 20, 1871; *Svoboda* 2, no. 24, November 27, 1871.

fervor and sacrifice be released without which no great battles for national liberation can be fought."¹⁰⁰ 'Inner' freedom, therefore, was the precondition for the 'outer' liberation. Thus political liberty at home and national independence, internal (civic) and external (irredentist) nationalism coalesced into a single ideal.

Consequently nationality and freedom were taken to be not simply the two pillars of the national-liberal doctrine; they were said to be mutually contingent. In the program of the Serbian Popular Liberal Party (founded in 1869), the leader of the 'unredeemed' Serbs in the Dual Monarchy, Svetozar Miletić, wrote: "Nationality and liberty are one and the same thing; nationality is the quintessence of a nation's liberty. That is why our slogan has always been and will always be liberty and nationality, or the strengthening and development of comprehensive liberty and Serbian nationality in every country where Serbs live in politically significant numbers."¹⁰¹ Albeit less explicitly, Simion Bărnuțiu, Miletić's equal among the Romanians in Transylvania, made the same connection: "Each nation is individual, and all national rights are united in the personality of the nation. . . . Now it should be known to the Romanians, too, that the public rights of the Romanians are a common possession of all Romanians, not the private property of some . . ."¹⁰² In all these cases the individual and the collective existed in symbiosis, with civic liberty subsumed under the overarching 'nation's liberty.'

For the Romanian 1848 generation in the principalities, the entwinement of nationality and freedom contained a vital social element as well. The freedom of the nation for them implied not only the political liberation of society, but also the emancipation of the peasant—an issue that was absent from the liberals' agenda in Serbia and Bulgaria, where such a problem did not exist. For the Romanian radical-liberals the land and peasant question was the most critical one of all, "the great political

¹⁰⁰ Slobodan Jovanović, *Druga vlada Miloša i Mihaila, 1858–1868* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1933), 282. L. Karavelov reiterated this view: if Serbia was unable to encourage the liberation of the Balkan Christians, it was not for lack of weapons or resources but for lack of internal freedom. Success in foreign policy depended on domestic freedom: Đorđe Ignjatović, "Političke veze Lyubena Kravelova sa Srbima," *Istorijski časopis* 16–17 (1970), 151. At that time (1868) Karavelov was a correspondent in Belgrade for the Russian newspaper *Golos*.

¹⁰¹ Svetozar Miletić, "Osnova programa za srpsku liberalno-opozicionu stranku" (1869), in *Izabrani članci Svetozara Miletića*, ed. Miroslav Jerkov (Novi Sad: Štamparija Jovanović i Bogdanov, 1939), 136–148.

¹⁰² Simion Bărnuțiu, "The Public Law of the Romanians" (1867), cited in *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 2, 164–165.

and social problem of the principalities,” as Nicolae Bălcescu called it: its solution would determine not just the principalities’ future, “but the future of all Romanians as well.” Bălcescu’s groundbreaking analysis of the history of the land question, besides supplying the liberal reformers with historical arguments, postulated the connection between its solution and the continued existence of Romanianism and the Romanian nation, between the success of the social revolution and that of the national revolution.¹⁰³ The 1848 liberals saw endowing the peasant with property as a powerful means of awakening his national self-awareness and readiness to defend his fatherland. To them the question was not merely one of the relationship between landowners and peasants but one of prime national importance. As Mihail Kogălniceanu put it in 1848, “In order for our country to become civilized, we should have numerous proprietors, because only where there is love for the land is there also love for the fatherland. . . . The peasant question . . . is the very question of the Romanian nationality.”¹⁰⁴ Years later, in 1862, he would still insist that “the improvement of the situation of the peasantry” concerned “the foundation of our national existence.”¹⁰⁵

Immediately after 1848 Ioan D. Negulici, a revolutionary philologist, published a dictionary of political neologisms, in which “liberal” was defined as “the protector of humanity and of the rights of the nations.” In all three countries in the post-revolutionary age, indeed, political capacity moved away from the idea of the “political dwelling” of individual citizens, which dominated in the 1830s and 1840s, toward the ‘totality’ of the national community—a notion that a few decades later would justify the (National) Liberal Parties’ claim to be the political representative of the respective nation. In this usage the understanding of the nation was not explicitly ethnic (as it would later become) but a substitute for citizenship.¹⁰⁶ The full implications of this credo became visible after the liberals’ accession to power in the 1870s.

In the multiethnic imperial contexts of the Habsburg and the Ottoman empires, the tension between civil rights and the national idea inherent

¹⁰³ Nicolae Bălcescu, “Despre starea socială a muncitorilor plugari în principatele române în deosebite timpuri,” in Nicolae Bălcescu. *Opere*, vol. 2, ed. G. Zane (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1986), 151–162.

¹⁰⁴ Cited in Andreia Roman, *Le Populisme Quarante-huitard dans les Principautés Roumaines* (Bucharest: Éditions de la Fondation Culturelle Roumaine, 1999), 56–57.

¹⁰⁵ Michail Kogălniceanu, *Opere*, vol. 3, part 1, 162, cited in Baar, *Historians and Nationalism*, 281.

¹⁰⁶ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 378.

in such an understanding of the liberal project surfaced relatively early and came to a head during the debate around the 'nationality question' and the Nationality Law in the Hungarian Parliament in the latter half of the 1860s.

After 1848 the Serbian and the Romanian liberals' plans for territorialized national autonomy collided with the Hungarian liberals' project of political nationhood as it was powerfully formulated by József Eötvös (1813–1871).¹⁰⁷ While acknowledging the existence of various ethno-cultural communities in Hungary, Eötvös questioned the viability of politicizing and territorializing these differences. The ethno-cultural definition of the nation and the movements for political emancipation on this basis were, according to him, both harmful and anti-liberal: rather than solving the 'minority issue,' they would create new majorities and minorities, and new inequalities between nations, hence between individuals as well. Individual freedom and civil rights could be safeguarded only in the framework of a political nation-state impervious to cultural and linguistic differences. The Nationality Law of 1868 institutionalized this vision by postulating the "unity and indivisibility of the Hungarian nation, in which every citizen of the country is an equal member regardless of his nationality."¹⁰⁸

Confronted with this notion of nationhood, the Serbian and Romanian liberal leaders in Hungary felt compelled to define their own. As early as 1848, as we have seen, Simion Bărnuțiu maintained that there could not be human liberty where there was no free national development, and it could be free only within an autonomous territory or, better still, proper state. This reasoning was not necessarily illiberal, yet it made the balance between individual and collective rights precarious in theory and unsustainable in practice.

Miletić launched his attack by rejecting the assumption that individual rights and civil freedoms guaranteed by the constitution were sufficient for the preservation of national identity. "A people disrupted into the atoms of civil-political rights cannot develop its nationality even under the best constitution."¹⁰⁹ By the late 1860s the confrontation with the Hungarian national-liberal vision decisively pushed him to defend the collective

¹⁰⁷ In the early 1850s, Eötvös set forth his influential views on this issue in *On the Equality of the Nationalities in Austria* (1851) and *Influence of the Ruling Ideas of the 19th Century on the State* (1854).

¹⁰⁸ Tibor Pall, *Mađarska politička javnost i srpsko pitanje na Balkanu 1860–1878* (Novi Sad: Univerzitet Novi Sad, 2001), 37.

¹⁰⁹ "Odbrana naši zahtevanja," *Srbski dnevnik*, November 17, 1860, cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 433.

rights of the Serbs at the expense of their individual rights. "I am of the contrary opinion," he stated in a speech on the nationality question in the Hungarian Parliament in 1868,

individual, the individual civil personality even if a source of right, is not the source of all rights; there is in the moral world, ruled by the law of liberty, moral or collective existences which do not derive all their rights from single individuals or from the aggregation of the individual persons' will, but which carry some important rights in themselves, in their nature and definition; such existences, moral personalities, are the state, the church... So it is with nations, as a moral personality of the people. Nation is not the right of individual persons.¹¹⁰

Miletić believed that access to equal individual rights without collective national rights was not simply inadequate but also dangerous, as it opened the door "for the cream of our intelligentsia... to desert their own nation in order to make a career in any field of public life." Free personal choice was thus superseded by the prescriptive exigency of sustaining the national collectivity and totality.

Starting from a more legalistic position Mihajlo Polit-Desančić (1833–1920), the major theoretician of the movement, arrived at a similar conclusion. In the pamphlet "Nationality and Its State-Legal Basis" (1862), he set out to prove the possibility, contrary to Eötvös's assertion, of fusing the cultural and the political understanding of nationhood. In that he drew on the concept of the legal state (*Rechtsstaat*) with certain national-liberal modifications. National rights, he asserted, were most closely linked with personal freedoms; civil rights were useless if they meant forsaking the national collectivity. The solution, according to Polit-Desančić, was a multinational federal state, preferably a South Slav one, not constitutionally guaranteed civil and political rights, which Hungarians would use as instruments for assimilation.¹¹¹ Karavelov's vision of the "lasting, happy and progressive state" shared this understanding: such a state could exist only if it "1) is made up of one nationality or at least one kinfolk [*pleme*] possessing the same mores, customs and religion; 2) is built upon liberal principles, as in the United States, Switzerland and Belgium."¹¹² These principles were meant to ensure the "freedom, nationality [*narodnost*] and individual self [*svoyata lichnost*]" of fifty million Christians, living under Ottoman and Habsburg rule, and to be incarnated in a "brotherly

¹¹⁰ *Govor o pitanju narodnosti*, cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 433.

¹¹¹ Ress, *The Value System of Serb Liberalism*, 352.

¹¹² *Svoboda*, I, 42, September 16, 1870.

federation [constituted] on an entirely liberal basis.”¹¹³ This was the radical liberals’ response to the Ottoman attempts to lay the foundations for a ‘political nation’ through the reforms of 1839 and 1856, pledging equal rights to the non-Muslims, and to the ideology of ‘Ottomanism.’ The revolutionary nationalists, in fact, dismissed out of hand the idea that the Ottoman Empire could reform—but their actual concern was that support for their program of secession would weaken if these reforms succeeded.

Conventionally the linking of cultural and political boundaries has been seen as a *locus classicus* of romantic nationalism and Eastern European ‘obsession’ with the ethnically defined nation-state. But the Balkan liberals’ prescription in this sense appears less digressive when juxtaposed with the one that John S. Mill had formulated in the early 1850s when discussing the “necessary conditions of free institutions”:

It is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of government should coincide in the main with those of nationalities [...] Where the sentiment of nationality exists in any force, there is a *prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government, and a government to themselves apart. This is merely saying that the question of government ought to be decided by the governed.¹¹⁴

However, after the 1867 Austro-Hungarian Compromise and the adoption of the Nationality Law in Hungary in 1868, Serbian and Romanian national liberalisms were considerably radicalized, while their cooperation with Magyar liberalism, fairly contingent and intermittent until then, grew into outright enmity, which escalated in the following decades. After the establishment of the Omladina, Serbian liberals, both inside and outside the principality, began to exert increasing pressure on the government in Belgrade to prepare for and, at the first suitable opportunity, wage a

¹¹³ *Svoboda*, II, 11, March 13, 1871; “Shto iskat balgarite?” *Svoboda*, I, 27, May 14, 1870. Karavelov, Miletić and Polit-Desančić’s quest for a South-Slav federation had purely pragmatic motives: to match the strength of their imperial adversaries (the Ottomans and the Habsburgs) and protect their countries from turning into a “colony of the European factories.” All of them, as well as Jovanović, looked at Switzerland as a model for their federation; Karavelov was also inspired by the idea of a “Balkan United States” on the American pattern. It should be noted, at the same time, that the Serbian liberals’ concept of a South Slav federation did not include the Croats and the Slovenes and rested on the preeminent position of the Serbian principality. See Svetozar Miletić, “Istočno pitanje,” in Svetozar Miletić, *Sabrani spisi*, vol. 1 (Novi Sad: Zavod za Udžbenike, 1999), 447; Mihajlo Polit-Desančić, “Istočno pitanje i njegovo organsko rešenje” (1862), *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 33 (1986), 147–172; *Planove i programi*, 78–79.

¹¹⁴ John Stuart Mill, “Considerations on Representative Government” (1851), in John Stuart Mill, *Essays on Politics and Society* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 547.

'war of independence' against the Ottoman Empire, preferably with its own forces. Underlying this bellicose nationalist stance was their conviction that the national question would not be solved unless all Serbs achieved, not political or territorial autonomy within the Dual Monarchy, but complete unification in a single nation-state. In this national struggle the idea of Slav community and solidarity was repeatedly evoked by Serbian and Bulgarian liberals alike. "We are Serbs and Slavs at the same time, which means we are members of a divided and scattered nation, the Serbs, but at the same time, we are members of a large race, the Slavs," Miletić preached.¹¹⁵

In many ways the views and the concepts of the reformist (evolutionist, moderate) current in the national-liberal movement were closer to 'classical' liberal tenets than were those of their revolutionary opponents (whom they often dubbed "demagogues" and "charlatans"). First of all, they tended to place more importance on individual rights and personal freedom, or at least considered their cultivation indispensable for the proper operation of a free 'civilized' society. They also tended to conceive of the nation not as a 'natural' given entitled by its very ethno-cultural individuality to freedom and statehood but as a disparate social fabric in need of sustained long-term effort in order to be consolidated and prepared for the tasks of citizenship. What they generally shared with the radical camp of self-proclaimed national leaders was (the combination of) a pedagogical approach and democratic leanings.

The evolutionist perspective, whose most eloquent and popular spokesmen in Bulgaria were Petko R. Slaveykov (1827–1895) and Marko Balabanov (1837–1921), and in an earlier period Ivan Seliminski, was shaped by two fundamental premises: the pre-eminence of the Greek nationalist threat and the need for consolidation of the Bulgarian nationality *within* the framework of the Ottoman Empire. The two were, to a large extent, mutually contingent. For the whole liberal reformist camp, the prime danger to the Bulgarian national 'awakening' and survival were the assimilationist policies of the Greek clergy of the Constantinople Patriarchate and the Greek schools, both increasingly supported by the aggressive young Greek Kingdom. Indeed, the transformation of Bulgarian liberal nationalism into a broader movement with a characteristic social and cultural message took place in the course of the struggle for Bulgarian schools and a Bulgarian church—which would be administered by a Bulgarian Synod

¹¹⁵ Miletić, *Osnova programa*, cited in Jerkov, *Izabrani članci Svetozara Miletića*, 135.

and staffed by a Bulgarian clergy. (The sultan endorsed the establishment of such a church, the Bulgarian Exarchate, in 1870.) Any “radical change of affairs in Turkey” while that critical battle was on, the evolutionists argued, would pose the threat of confronting “the future political right of the Greek element over the whole of the Ottoman Empire.” The “true national interests,” wrote Slaveykov in 1867 in support of the dualist project, required that the Bulgarian nation side with the ruling Turkish element which, “albeit not free of certain deficiencies,” would allow for its unhampered, mental and material, consolidation; any premature disruption of the multiethnic imperial rule would expose the incipient Bulgarian identity to “political extinction.”¹¹⁶ The liberal-reformist obsession with ‘Grecomania,’ the church and school issues—with the “Greek threat” in general—thus resulted from an imperative to define the Bulgarian identity and rights vis-à-vis an assertive rival nationalism rather than against a reigning yet pre-nationalist imperial power. The Serbian aspirations towards “whole regions in western Bulgaria,” made increasingly explicit since the late 1860s, added to the reformists’ conviction that “the preservation of Turkey is one of the highest necessities for us.”¹¹⁷

Although they shared the organic understanding of the community they spoke for, the moderate liberals did not consider their ‘nationality’ ready to act as a coherent and self-aware political whole. Accordingly, they were far more cautious than their radical counterparts as regards the nationality’s ingrained capacity to exercise its collective right to political existence. “No nation has ever appeared in the world adult and perfect in every respect,” Marko Balabanov maintained. Common origin, cultural tradition and language, indispensable as they were for each nationality (ethnicity), were not sufficient to turn it into a *narod* (nation). “The particles constituting a nation can perfectly well exist and partake in the general movement, in the general life, without the existence of this nation . . .”¹¹⁸ Both Slaveykov and Balabanov believed that what gave a national community life was the (cultivated) awareness of its distinctive historical being. “Could a nation exist, could it live without the common notion of the special national being? Never. Could it call itself and be a happy nation

¹¹⁶ Petko R. Slaveykov, “Iztălkuvanieto,” *Makedoniya* 1, no. 12, February 18, 1867.

¹¹⁷ “Under Turkish protection we shall develop our nationality, we can knit together the disparate parts of our half-asleep people and give it national unity . . . Then we will see who Macedonia belongs to.” *Makedoniya*, no. 48, November 30, 1871.

¹¹⁸ Marko Balabanov, “Narodno bitie,” *Vek*, no. 26, July 6, 1874.

when it is uncultivated and uneducated? Never. Education is a *testimonium juris*, legal testimony of the uniqueness of spiritual outlook."¹¹⁹

While Miletić asserted that the possession of "national consciousness, as the spiritual basis of a nation, and political consciousness, as the basis of statehood" was the "*punctum saliens*" of the Christian nations and the very fount of their "creative spiritual force,"¹²⁰ for Balabanov the crystallization of such awareness, and thus the creation of the nation itself, was a lengthy historical process and one that required conscious effort:

Centuries and years are often needed before any one nation can step on the world scene as a distinct society. But for that the centuries and the years alone are not enough. There must also be favorable circumstances and tireless efforts to form the members, who on account of the uniformity of language, mores, customs, aptitudes and aspirations will constitute that whole which will be called a nation.¹²¹

What distinguishes this notion of a nation's right to free existence, therefore, was not simply its cultural-linguistic specificities, since by themselves they were not able to raise this nation to the task of forming a political entity; for a nation to be able to exercise its political rights, it had to possess, or rather acquire, consciousness of its unique existence:

[The] living spirit, [the] divine wreath of the national being resides in the awareness of its unique individuality, in the sense which a nation possesses of itself alone and which makes it capable of living politically. Nationality by itself, without this life-giving spirit [national self-awareness], cannot attain civil identity [*graždanska samobitnost*]. Any nation, in order to have political importance, should possess vital, inner forces and a proper reason to exist.¹²²

But who would inculcate this self-awareness, and how could it be spread across the whole imagined territory of the community? In the pre-state framework of Bulgarian nationalism, the answer presented a serious problem that could only be solved at the cost of another 'anomaly' to the canonical liberal doctrine. Both liberal-reformists and liberal-radicals felt that national leadership fell to them and them alone: they were the augurs of the nation's aspirations and its educators, those who "embody the national spirit" and at the same time "enlighten and lead the national opinion."¹²³

¹¹⁹ Petko R. Slaveykov, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Bălgarski pisatel, 1956), 158.

¹²⁰ Miletić, Istočno pitanje.

¹²¹ Balabanov, "Narodno bitie."

¹²² Marko Balabanov, "Nachaloto na narodnostta," *Vek*, no. 46, November 15, 1875.

¹²³ "Narodnoto mnenie," *Makedoniya* 1, no. 58, August 19, 1867.

However, the one nationwide institution capable of channeling these leaders' message to the whole community was the church. This led to the inverted and atypical 'anti-clericalism' of the Bulgarian liberal nationalists. The figure of the 'enlightened and patriotic clergy' was the one entrusted with the key mission to sow light, knowledge and national consciousness, even science, to open schools and promote freedom. The administration of the separate Bulgarian Church was accordingly regarded as a major school for training and exercising competence in democratic government by all types of Bulgarian nationalists, moderates and radicals alike.

Jevrem Grujić might have had something similar in mind when, immediately after the revolution of 1848, he formulated the connection between "the people's outer liberation" through education into its origins and character and its "inner liberation" through the political education of the nation.

The people should 1) for its outer liberation, make the entire Serbian nation aware of its former empire and its brilliant future; it must also become better acquainted with and more closely linked to the other Slav branches; 2) for its inner liberation, make the nation aware of what it actually is, what rights it should have; what the government is about, why it exists, from whom it exists and what its limits are; the nation must be told what it means to live in a state, and it must be called upon to live in that way.¹²⁴

The evolutionists thus went well beyond the Herderian cultural-linguistic understanding of the nation, more so than the liberal revolutionaries ever did. In their view the nation was not ready, by virtue of its wisdom, spirit and traditions, to rise from the ashes and claim its collective rights to progress and liberty. The nation for them was an unfinished project, an ideal for the future—precisely because they did not believe that modernity somehow already existed in the depths of their societies—for which those who "had reached superior knowledge about themselves and their nation," that is, the 'responsible' liberals, were in charge.¹²⁵ This line of reasoning, as we shall see, would be definitively formulated by the Serbian Progressives in the 1880s.

Liberal evolutionism could also have a traditionalist face, and Mihail Kogălniceanu perhaps best illustrates it. While his steadfast positions on the peasants' social emancipation and enfranchisement were clearly democratic, and several of his reforms as a prime minister and minister

¹²⁴ Grujić, *Obzor države*, 175–180.

¹²⁵ Balabanov, "Narodno bitie."

(such as the emancipation of the Gypsies, the abolition of slavery and feudal privileges, and the agrarian reform) were emblematically liberal, in many ways his overall outlook was conservative. Like Ivan Seliminski, the early Bulgarian moderate-liberal who started as a revolutionary, after 1848 Kogălniceanu grew into an outspoken opponent of revolution, stating that “civilization stops when revolutions begin.”¹²⁶ In this respect, as with Balabanov, his primary debt was to German romanticism, historicism and evolutionism. While Balabanov’s views were heavily influenced by Herder, Hegel, Schelling and Schlegel, Kogălniceanu drew on the ideas of the Prussian politician and agrarian reformer August von Hardenberg, as well as the German historical school of law, particularly Savigny.¹²⁷ Hardenberg’s ‘recipe’ for Germany’s “ascent and growth”—“Democratic principles as part of a monarchic government”—he took as his own. Hence his advocacy for “lenient and gradual” reforms organically harmonizing with the traditional Romanian institutions, and law which “should be an indigenous plant, an expression of the habits and the needs of the nation.”¹²⁸ As even in his own activities as a modernizer this proved quite difficult, Kogălniceanu the historian went to great lengths to prove how many of the innovations he stood for were actually part of Romanian history.

Popular Sovereignty and Democracy

Nineteenth-century classical liberalism was deeply suspicious of democracy. In light of the class conflicts which followed it, many liberals, among them John S. Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville, and Jacob Burckhardt, were ambivalent over the legacy of the French Revolution. They saw these conflicts as undermining freedom and buttressing state despotism; their origin was the premature involvement of the lower classes in politics. ‘Tyranny of the majority’ was the name of the threat which, as 1793 had shown, could easily degenerate into personal dictatorship. Freedom was inviolable, and equality before the law was indispensable; however, the ‘right’ to political participation and social equality threatened individual

¹²⁶ Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Texte social-politice alese* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1967), 159.

¹²⁷ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 75.

¹²⁸ Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Profesie de credință* (Bucharest and Chișinău: Litera Internațional, 2003), 286. Kogălniceanu himself admitted, in 1891, that it was “largely to German culture, the University of Berlin, German society, and the men and great patriots who accomplished the raising up of Germany again and its unity, that I owe all that I have become in my country, and that it was from the fire of German patriotism that the torch of my Romanian patriotism took its flame.” Cited in Boia, *History and Myth*, 164.

freedom. Both Tocqueville and Mill equated majority rule with despotism from below.

As the single most popular liberal theoretician across the various national-liberal camps in the Balkans, Mill deserves to have his position on this issue spelled out. Mill was not an opponent of democracy. Not only did he admit, together with Tocqueville, the logical and inevitable expansion of franchise, including women; he saw it as indispensable in two respects: as a school for defending individual rights, that is, against despotism, and a school for moral improvement, that is, general progress. However, for him general political franchise and effective democracy were ideals, the endpoint in a lengthy, gradual process of human improvement, not a matter of practical policy in his own time. Neither Mill nor his liberal counterparts believed in the *right* to political participation: granting political franchise meant bestowing trust, which not everyone deserved. In the contemporary state of Western societies, liberals believed, general enfranchisement was most likely to degenerate into a tyranny of the masses, obliterating the individual and leading to dictatorship.¹²⁹ Not only the Romanian 'aristocratic liberals' but also the Bulgarian and Serbian (so-called) conservatives shared these apprehensions.

Yet what came to characterize the nineteenth century after 1830 was a movement toward growing political participation or what came to be known as 'liberal democracy.' Seen in a wider European perspective, Balkan liberalisms associating themselves with the Mazzinist national-revolutionary tradition made a major contribution in this direction. In fact, it can be argued that political (rather than ethnic) nationalism was largely responsible for the strong democratic, or even populist, 'turn' of liberalism in countries such as Serbia and Bulgaria whose public ethos was equalitarian and where a *censitaire* representative system would have encountered wide opposition. This was the source of the idea of popular sovereignty, which is an essentially democratic, not a liberal, notion. Along with extracting the norms of modernity from the popular tradition, the idea that the nation resided with 'the people,' or the lower classes, in Michelet's sense, made it possible for the liberals to integrate the peasants into their project of modernization. The principle of popular sovereignty

¹²⁹ Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 74–75. This author is right to maintain that, insofar as Mill's thought synthesized liberal theory at the time, its inconsistencies on the issue of political participation are symptomatic of European liberalism generally (*ibid.*, 76). The enthronement of Louis Napoleon in 1852, after the popular vote had been granted to the French, only confirmed the liberals' fears.

thus served not only to underscore their democratic leanings but also to frame their nationalist doctrine.

The idea of national sovereignty in its liberal reading was announced for the first time at the St. Andrew's Day Assembly in 1858, which most historians, and the liberals themselves, considered a turning point in Serbia's modern history. This assembly became the forum where the liberals could, for the first time, publicly formulate the main points of their political doctrine. They did not as yet present a full-fledged program for reforms but rather a list of principles which the leading liberal figure, Vladimir Jovanović, reconstructed in his *Memoirs* thus: the principle of sovereignty (the "right of each people to freely and independently determine itself and its fate and to be a sovereign master of its home"); a constitution adopted by the Assembly ("Serbia's constitution should be a free expression of the people's will. The people's will is properly expressed only by a national representation that is elected by a free vote of the people and which is free and independent in its work"); a constitutional monarchy; ministerial responsibility; free press; budgetary jurisdiction of the Assembly; guaranteed personal, religious, economic and political freedoms; placing personal abilities at the service of the common good; fraternal solidarity in foreign policy; and resistance to foreign powers' interference in Serbia's internal affairs.¹³⁰

At the core of this 'checklist' was the principle of popular sovereignty.¹³¹ "The true sovereign and the true autocrat can be no other but the people itself," Karavelov declared on behalf of his peers.¹³² Individuals' civil rights, freedom of speech, association and assembly, freedom of property and economic activity were crucial, and they had to be safeguarded by a constitution: the ideology of Serbian and Bulgarian liberalism, in this respect, matched the prescriptive liberal view of society. However, for such a society to become possible, "the common will should be the supreme law and the unlimited master, it should be the sovereign." The main values and institutions intrinsic to the liberal doctrine—parliamentary government,

¹³⁰ Bataković, Vladimir Jovanović, 147–148. These demands were laid down in the draft of the Law for the National Assembly presented by Jevrem Grujić to the St. Andrew's Day Assembly. See Bataković, Jevrem Grujić, 126–127.

¹³¹ In the formulation of Jevrem Grujić, "[we want] to keep in force that common law, according to which the people is the source and the bearer of all power in Serbia and according to which it exercises this power through its Popular Assembly": Grujić, *Zapisi Jevrema Grujića*, vol. 2, 71.

¹³² Lyuben Karavelov, "Bălgarski glas. From BRTSK," (1870), *Săbrani săchineniya*, vol. 12 (1992), 20.

"equality in freedom," "rule of law," a responsible executive—the Serbian and Bulgarian liberals derived from the crucial notion of the popular sovereignty, the "common will," which meant "the will of all, expressed by universal vote, or the vote of all on the basis of freedom," as Vladimir Jovanović put it.

It was out of this hierarchy of liberal values that the demands for unqualified enfranchisement emerged and were pushed to liberalism's center stage in both Serbia and Bulgaria. Their liberal-democratic rationale was most eloquently articulated by Jovanović: "Electoral rights belong to all citizens; the parliament . . . is elected by the whole people on the basis of general franchise . . . The people is empowered to arrange the state and dispose of its revenues as it considers it best." A qualified franchise based on income, Jovanović thought, created an "electoral monopoly" of those whose interests might often conflict with the interests of those excluded from voting, most notably concerning taxation and the distribution of state revenues.¹³³ Full equality of rights, effective popular representation, and government accountability to the parliament: these were the basic institutions of a liberal-democratic state, the embodiment of popular sovereignty.

Democracy as it is understood today does not mean solely a form of government but also the composition, arrangement and the whole inner and outer life of society. . . . Today's awareness of democracy locates the living source of power in society itself. This source is the general will expressed by the free vote of all who live in the society, on the basis of the equality of their natural rights and duties. . . . Freedom and justice: that is, in two words, what raises today's awareness of democracy above the concepts of older times. . . . Such a model of democracy is not easy to accomplish, [as it] consecrates equality of rights and duties, equality of freedom for all and everyone . . . once and for all eliminating all those institutions which interfere with this equality.¹³⁴

The vision underlying this political ideology actually fused two distinct phases in liberalism's Western evolution: liberal theory and the practice of liberal democracy.¹³⁵

¹³³ Vladimir Jovanović, "Društvena i međunarodna borba za opstanak," *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 60 (1885), 214–218, cited in Bataković, Vladimir Jovanović, 157–159.

¹³⁴ Vladimir Jovanović, *Politički rečnik* (Novi Sad: Ujedinjena omladina srpska, 1870–1873), 713–715, cited in Bataković, Vladimir Jovanović, 159–160.

¹³⁵ As David Held has suggested, we should distinguish between liberal theory—the liberalism of Hobbes and Locke, preoccupied with the protection of the individual rights and inviolability of property—and the practice of liberal democracy, based on the responsibility of government to its citizens as promoted by Bentham and Mill, which gradually

However, as we have seen, the notion of democracy to which Serbian and Bulgarian liberals referred was emphatically egalitarian. P.R. Slaveykov's observations nicely capture this perspective: "The Bulgarians have an aversion for inequality and hate fiercely the notability [*chorbadzilăka*] and everything that smacks of it. . . . Today the strong torrent of democratic ideas floods in all over . . . and demands equality."¹³⁶ Polit-Desančić asserted that the Serbs in the Habsburg monarchy had been ruled by "true democracy," where "lawyers, clerks, traders and artisans lived like brothers, just as they lived fraternally with the laborers in the towns and the villages."¹³⁷ The association of (the affinity for) social equality with democracy also motivated the fusion of the locally reared peasant's instinctive democratism and the nation-based Western concept of popular sovereignty. This, what we might call 'liberal populism,' was characteristic of the Serbian and the Bulgarian national liberals, in theory and political discourse if not automatically in institutional fulfillments.

The way Jovanović argued for full political participation suggests that his concern was as much about cultivating a citizenry of politically responsible individual voters as about preventing the establishment of an electoral structure that would cause social injustice to the underprivileged. Karavelov fully backed this understanding of the primary 'tasks' of democracy. He, too, believed that rapid national progress and personal well-being were possible only where "those who govern and those governed are equal between themselves and in front of the law;" "national self-government and low state taxes" were part and parcel of the equality he had in mind.¹³⁸ The principle of legal equality itself prescribed that nobody could be denied the right to vote and participate in public life. Addressing the fears of an assembly elected by an illiterate nation, susceptible to demagoguery and abuse of its extensive powers, the Serbian and the Bulgarian liberals responded that political freedom and participation, free elections and a free press were the best school for political education of the people and a guarantee that it would be represented by the best "sons of the people." "Passing through the school of public life, which freedom had opened to them, the people are not going to

came into effect in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries: David Held, "Central Perspectives on the Modern State," in *Political Theory and the Modern State*, ed. David Held (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 11–55.

¹³⁶ *Makedoniya*, no. 1, January 8, 1871.

¹³⁷ Cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 421–423.

¹³⁸ *Svoboda* 2, no. 2, January 11, 1871; *Svoboda* 2, no. 11, March 13, 1871; *Svoboda* 2, no. 27, May 14, 1870.

vote blindfolded, but with understanding of their rights and duties, with awareness developed by the everyday clash of opinions (views) in the field of the press and of public meetings and assemblies."¹³⁹ It was on this point that the Serbian and Bulgarian liberalisms—as yet self-legitimizing and oppositional—differed substantially from the version of liberalism that was dominant in Europe at the time, one which was apparently sensitive to the dangers of the ‘tyranny of the majority,’ as well as the later, far more elitist liberalisms of the Bulgarian conservative-liberals and the Serbian Progressives who came to power in the early 1880s.

With radicals like Karavelov the philosophy of political liberalism had crystallized into a more utilitarian and less romantic vision of national democracy. In the first place he cared little about the social or cultural base for his liberal activism and not at all about how embedded it was in tradition. His vision was consistent with his concrete exemplars. Having chosen the United States and Switzerland as standard-bearers of the liberal polity, and being unconstrained by the political reality of a monarchic state, Karavelov was able to champion republican-democratic ideals far more openly than his Serbian peers realistically could. “Monarchy is a conspiracy against the nation’s well-being and its freedom,” he contended; for that reason, any monarchic state was likely to be undermined by internal dissent and instability.¹⁴⁰ In the New World, on the other hand, dozens of religions and nationalities were calling themselves Americans and together were defending their common interests: “and all this ensues from the fact that the people itself is its own tutor and that itself creates its own laws, conforming to its own desires and achieved by its own will, which its governors are obliged to execute accurately.”¹⁴¹ Remarkably, for Karavelov it was not Europe with its dynasties and nobilities, rigid state and social structures and antiquated politics that could serve as the model for the young and vigorous nations. Such a model instead he saw in Switzerland and America; to him they were “*the West*,” where “human happiness” had materialized—and it had done so because there and only there it rested on “pure human freedom” (“Let the Turks seek French civilization

¹³⁹ Jovanović, *Politički rečnik*, 647, cited in Bataković, Vladimir Jovanović, 161.

¹⁴⁰ Lyuben Karavelov, “Bălgarski glas” (1870), cited in Petko S. Petkov, *Idei za dărzhavno ustroistvo i upravlēnie v bălgarskoto obshtestvo 1856–1879 g.* (Veliko Tărnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodii”), 66. Jovanović was not explicitly against the monarchy—in fact, all his precepts concerned the separation of power under a constitutional-monarchic regime—but he did stress the advantages of a republican system. No Serbian liberals, despite the sympathies of some in this direction, openly demanded a republic.

¹⁴¹ *Svoboda* 4, no. 45, October 7, 1870.

and emulate the French as they [the Turks] have no need for science and knowledge ...").¹⁴²

The democratic messianism of Karavelov and Jovanović finds its counterpart in the Romanian context in the projects advanced by Nicolae Bălcescu, Constantin Rosetti and Simion Bărnuțiu, who included political representation in the sphere of natural rights, therefore as intrinsic to the 'law of liberty.' Most Romanian liberals, radical and moderate, however, were more than reluctant to allow the rural majority a share in the political society¹⁴³—a stance that was widely held by liberals elsewhere in Europe, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, but which was an exception, in values and theory at least, in the Balkans.

Romanian liberalism in the 1850s and 1860s was a strange mixture of emancipatory post-1848 rhetoric and the practices of conservative liberalism. The latter drew closer in many respects to the conservative liberalism of a Francois Guizot (1787–1874) than to the liberal-democratic versions south of the Danube. That brand of liberalism, in Western as well as East-Central Europe, is associated with Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), whose primary emphasis was on the security of private property ("private independence") as the true basis for freedom and democracy. In particular, Constant's distinction between the participatory "liberty of the ancients" and the "liberty of the moderns" based on political representation, civil freedoms and the rule of law was crucial in formulating one of the key guidelines of classical liberalism, namely that "individual liberty and popular democracy are contingently but not necessarily related."¹⁴⁴ Hence Constant insisted on political franchise limited by property qualification and defense for free entrepreneurship and trade. "Commerce inspires in men a vivid love of individual independence," he wrote—a conviction fully shared by 'professional liberals' like Ion C. Brătianu.¹⁴⁵

Predictably, the *pașoptist* rhetoric abounded with references to the sovereign nation (on behalf of which the liberals presumed to be speaking): "the Romanian people decides ..., the Romanian people wants ..., sovereign power stems from God and belongs to the whole country ..., the

¹⁴² *Zastava* 4 (1869), 35 (*Săbrani săchineniya*, VII, 58); *Svoboda* 1 (1870), 11.

¹⁴³ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 380–381.

¹⁴⁴ Gray, *Liberalism*, 21.

¹⁴⁵ Benjamin Constant, "De la liberté des anciens comparée a celle des modernes" (1816), in *Œuvres politiques de Benjamin Constant* (Paris: Charpentier, 1874), 267. For Bulgarian and Serbian liberals, Constant was more important as a theoretician of the constitutional monarchy and the division of power, making a clear theoretical distinction between the powers of the king and those of the ministers.

Romanian state is the Romanian people..." But beyond the mobilizing drive and popular appeal of this revolutionary rhetoric, Constantin Rosetti was perhaps the only Romanian liberal who shared the original conviction of his Serbian and Bulgarian co-fellows that "in its choice the majority of the people can never be wrong because the voice of the people is the voice of God," and Bălcescu and Kogălniceanu among the very few whose concept of democracy included the Romanian village. The weight of the 'peasant question' in both social and political terms can only be compared to the weight of the intransigence of the landed nobility—from which, it should be remembered, the national liberals sprang too—to relinquish more of their economic and political privileges than the 'national interest' (as they read it) would deem reasonable. N. Bălcescu was among the few Romanian liberals who made an explicit connection between liberty and property for the mass of the nation—the peasants. Without the right to property, "liberty and equality are lies," he warned, arguably in reference to the 1848 democratic exhortations, and the people would be slaves or proletarians.¹⁴⁶ In 1853 Brătianu still believed that "the notions of nationality, liberty and democracy are interrelated."¹⁴⁷ But, with the sole exception of Constantin Rosetti, who continued to champion universal (male) suffrage and majoritarianism, the actual pressure for broadening the franchise further than the urban liberal stronghold until the very eve of World War I would be left to the tiny, albeit vocal, group of the Romanian social democrats. As for moderates like Kogălniceanu, in time they grew increasingly critical of the idea of a more radical electoral reform, on the grounds that it threatened to jeopardize the internal stability and thus the international security of the state (this was also the favorite argument of Ion C. Brătianu). The idea of national sovereignty in nineteenth-century Romania, as formulated back in 1848 by Dumitru Brătianu, hardly ever outgrew the abstract aspirations for "convergence of all classes in society and agreement of all interests" and for a government which would "embody the whole nation and each one of its members."¹⁴⁸

Significantly, the notions of political participation among the Transylvanian Romanians were unmistakably liberal-democratic, and as such, closer to the Serbian and the Bulgarian than to those of their co-nationals in the principalities. As Simion Bărnuțiu stated:

¹⁴⁶ Bălcescu, *Mersul revoluției în istoria românilor*, 468–471.

¹⁴⁷ Ion C. Brătianu, "Naționalitatea," in *Gîndirea românească*, eds. Paul Cornea and Mihai Zamfir, part 1, 471.

¹⁴⁸ Cited in Roman, *Le Populisme Quarante-huitard*, 40–41.

The sovereignty of the Romanian people is the supreme value, which applies to all its territory, individuals, goals, and national affairs. This unique, invisible, sacred and totally independent sovereignty, not subject to any other sovereignty on earth, is the condition of a true human and national life, without which none of the most sacred goals could be achieved... Sovereignty characterizes all free peoples... when the people have their laws, and magistrates through whom they govern themselves...¹⁴⁹

Similar to Karavelov (but unlike Jovanović), Bărnăuțiu considered Western constitutions to be inappropriate for the Romanians, since “these constitutions are the creations of feudalism which we see in the House of Lords in England, in the Chamber of Peers in France, even in the Senate House in Belgium, and in the customary assemblies of the Romanian principalities and so on.” As they were built on the idea of the hereditary principle and sharing sovereignty with princes, “none of these constitutions fulfills the wish of the nation or the postulates of the human mind and life... European constitutionalism is a political fiction invented with the aim of making peoples forget their liberty, by making them believe that they are free.”¹⁵⁰

Against this backdrop, the position of evolutionist reformers like Petko R. Slaveykov and Marko Balabanov on the issue of ‘popular rule’ can be located somewhere midway between the radical (and subversive) democratism of a Jovanović or a Karavelov and the conservative liberalism of a Kogălniceanu. According to Slaveykov, freedom, although a natural right, was not a natural talent—it was the result of learning and experience. Yet he believed that the best political school for training the nation to benefit from the “public political welfare” was local self-government, the practice of “communal freedom.”¹⁵¹ Slaveykov’s view of democratization, therefore, drew him closer to the populist liberal-democratic camp than to its conservative-liberal opponents.

Balabanov’s position pointed in the opposite direction. He was not inclined to treat the exercise of “communal freedom” as a school in citizenship. He preferred to put his stakes on the power and mutual reinforcement of “faith” and “science” as the sound vehicles of a true “national revival.”¹⁵² As late as 1876, Balabanov argued for a “moral revolution” and

¹⁴⁹ Simion Bărnăuțiu, “The Public Law of the Romanians” (1867), cited in *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 2, 166.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 167.

¹⁵¹ “Prakticheskata svoboda,” *Makedoniya* 2, no. 51, November 18, 1868.

¹⁵² Marko Balabanov, “Obshtestvenite opasnosti,” *Vek*, no. 13, March 29, 1875; “Obshtestvenite ni partii,” *Vek*, no. 5, February 1, 1875.

demanded not political or territorial autonomy for the Bulgarians but their “social revival within the [Ottoman] state and with the help of the state,” based on “legality” (thus nonviolence), “true justice” (involving “true safety for life, for property, for honor”), “rule of law equal for all,” fair taxation, and “respect as [it is due to] citizens of a state.”¹⁵³ In many ways these demands envisaged a kind of Ottoman political nation, similar to József Eötvös’s conception of a Hungarian political nation, which happened to be as unacceptable to the Bulgarian radical liberals as it was to their Serbian co-fellows. Balabanov indirectly attacked the latter’s constructivist political designs when stating, in a style reminiscent of Kogălniceanu’s some years earlier: “The best constitution for every state is always the one which reflects local needs. Only fantasists can afford to dream sometimes that all human societies can live, develop and prosper under the same model of government.”¹⁵⁴

* * *

To sum up, the idea of democratic nationality, which the radical liberals across the region championed, fused the naturalistic (organic) and voluntaristic (political) conceptions of the nation. “Equality and democracy” had to transform the pre-political (ethnic) factors into a genuine “commonality of thought and destiny” and thus justify national independence.¹⁵⁵ This led to an inherently politicized (democratic) conception of the nation, which did not see ethno-cultural ingredients as sufficient for the nation’s legitimate existence; for the latter to materialize, there needed to be government by the people and popular sovereignty based on a liberal constitution. They saw the triumph of the principle of nationality in this political sense not as a betrayal of, but as the ultimate accomplishment

¹⁵³ Marko Balabanov, “Săvremenniyat duh na bălgarskiya narod,” *XIX-ti vek*, no. 11, March 13, 1876.

¹⁵⁴ Marko Balabanov, “Obshtinska avtonomiya,” *Vek*, no. 48, November 30, 1875. Balabanov admitted his debt in this respect to Edmund Burke’s conservative liberalism which, earlier in the century, had risen “powerfully and not without success against the reckless theories and deeds of the French Revolution . . . and rejected strongly the idea of transforming the social arrangements according to some abstract principles [and] arbitrary theories.” The same orientation made him question the moral consistency of modern civilization, which was epitomized by scientific and technological progress, freedom-loving ideas, cosmopolitanism, calls for brotherhood and humanism of “the 19th century,” but which had also witnessed bitter international hatreds and bloody wars and where “the most educated nations presented the most horrid sight of the world”: Marko Balabanov, “Trite shkoli i napredăkăt,” *Chitalishte* 1, no. 6, December 15, 1870, 167; Marko Balabanov, “XIX vek,” *XIX-i vek*, no. 7, January 14, 1876.

¹⁵⁵ Recchia and Urbinati, eds., *A Cosmopolitanism of Nations*, 11–12.

of, the legacy of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. The crucial point here is that the radical liberals had little uncertainty as to the people's preparedness to shoulder—under their 'science-based' leadership, of course—the burdens of self-government; their main concern was to implement the political structures that would enable the exercise of the 'national will.' For them political equality and participation were key instruments in forging the national collectivity and mobilizing its ability to act on behalf of that collectivity. As Karavelov put it, if the states of Belgium or Switzerland were progressing (unlike the France of Napoleon III), this was due to their being "constituted on truly constitutionalist and liberal bases"; despite their small size they were "prospering because each citizen is ready to defend his rights with his own blood, . . . because there one lives for all and all live for one."¹⁵⁶ "Freedom and democracy . . . enhance and strengthen the feeling of nationality," Mihajlo Polit-Desančić added.¹⁵⁷ The connection between democratic government and national coherence was therefore firmly established.

For the reformists, on the other hand, the very possibility of introducing political self-rule prior to cultivating national self-awareness and basic skills of citizenship threatened to jeopardize not only the nation's liberty but its survival. For them the problem was the lack not of democratic institutions but of capabilities to make such institutions work: "Obtaining a good is not difficult," Seliminski warned, "it is difficult retaining it."¹⁵⁸ Paradoxically in a sense, their conservative slant made them less inclined to erect the building of modern democracy on the people's traditions. Theirs was a more classically liberal vision of what the viable liberal state was about. As Alan S. Kahan has credibly argued, the political ends of the liberal reformists

were in fact Utopian, even revolutionary—perhaps envisaging a more radical change than that foreseen by most democrats. Democrats merely wished to give people rights they already possessed, in democratic theory. Liberals wanted to create political capacities in vast numbers of people who did not have them. . . . Liberals . . . were committed to an enormous educational project, the creation of a society in which the prerequisites of political capacity were a universal possession.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁶ *Libertatea* 3, January 20, 1871.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 426.

¹⁵⁸ Cited in Arnaudov, *Seliminski*, 481.

¹⁵⁹ Alan S. Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe: The Political Culture of Limited Suffrage* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 4.

In either case intrinsic to the liberal concept of popular sovereignty was the idea that the liberals would paternalistically guide and offer 'enlightenment' to the popular masses. They were to act as 'civilizing tutors' of the people in its march toward truth and freedom. In the Serbian and the Bulgarian cases this claim was dressed up in populist rhetoric—the liberals' own roots in the *demos* justifying their leading role by virtue of superior knowledge. In the Romanian case it was spelled out in literal terms: the people were "a big child" (or "giant-child") who, "like a monkey, loves to ape the behavior of those who govern it."¹⁶⁰

PART III: LIBERALISM IN POWER

Liberals were not merely the driving force behind the movements for national liberation and unification. Liberal parties or governments presided over the inauguration of modern constitutions in all three states (1866 in Romania, 1869 in Serbia and 1879 in Bulgaria), backed Russian military effort at the peak of the Eastern crisis of 1876–1878 and, in Serbia and Romania, held office when their countries were recognized as independent states at the Congress of Berlin. With respect to international recognition and national sovereignty, the liberals thus had much to claim as seminal achievements. This was not the case regarding the completion of national unification, though, and liberal parties and governments would continue to invest huge symbolic and material resources in irredentist designs. Now these efforts ran parallel to, and in fact often served to justify, the political strategy of building the nation-state from the top down and turning it into the driving force of modernization.

If there were a definition summing up the main characteristics shared by the three liberalisms studied here, it might arguably be *etatist modernization with a nationalist slant*. The diverse implications and institutionalizations of this politico-socio-economic configuration will be the subject matter of this last sub-chapter. Some elements of the broader international context relevant to the phenomena to be discussed, most notably the success of the 'illiberal' unification of Germany, the demise of 'emancipatory internationalism,' and the rise of more extreme leftist and rightist ideological currents across Europe, have already been mentioned. It should be noted here that European liberalism itself had undergone, in

¹⁶⁰ Cited in Roman, *Le Populisme Quarante-huitard*, 79–81.

the late 1850s and early 1860s, a transformation, sometimes defined as a transition from the 'old' to the 'new' liberalism, whose embodiment was John S. Mill's later writings.¹⁶¹ Among other things it implied a certain degree of state interference ("interventionist and statist tendencies") in some spheres of individual freedom until then considered inviolable—a fact that leads some to maintain that Mill had redirected liberalism from individualism towards collectivism.¹⁶² The social—or, some might say, 'socialist'—overtones in Mill's thought, even if far from privileging equality over liberty and society over the individual, resonated with the collectivist and egalitarian leanings of substantial groups among the Balkan liberals, especially in Serbia and Bulgaria. The economic crisis of 1873 and the big European states' protectionist reactions to it, on the other hand, delivered the *coup de grâce* to what had by then survived as liberal economic agendas in the three countries studied here.

Generally speaking, however, liberals were concerned with politics, not economics. "A coherent definition of liberalism," A. Kahan maintains, "demands that politics rather than economics be understood as central to European liberalism in the nineteenth century."¹⁶³ This observation is confirmed by the experience of Balkan liberalism, which generally, and not solely during its dissident phase, was political and national. Though they were acutely aware of the economic backwardness of their societies, the liberals' rise to power did not substantially redress the imbalance: issues of political representation, constitutional procedures and national unification continued to overshadow those about economic and social reform.

The only aspect of the national economy that was invariably present in the discussions was the relation of the state to the economy, not least because of its broader political and social implications. Several factors weighed heavily against the idea of a laissez-faire economy: the harsh international market competition between unequal participants; the rudimentary condition of the domestic capitalist market; the low educational standards of the great majority of the population; and the shift of most European states towards more protective economic policies. In the late 1860s and early 1870s, when Balkan liberalism matured and came

¹⁶¹ Gray, *Liberalism*, 29–30.

¹⁶² Mill deemed such interference desirable with respect to regulation of children's and women's labor, working conditions, general education, protection of women against oppression by men, and birth control. Cf. Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 72–73.

¹⁶³ Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 5.

to power, the laissez-faire economy was in retreat in Britain and France, while the state-driven Prussian (later German) economy was undergoing a spectacular rise. Finally, even when comfortably well-off as in Romania, the Balkan liberal elite remained heavily dependent on their connections with, and most often employment by, the state—a relationship that did not bode well for the idea of a minimalist state.

The role of liberalism in the development of the Romanian nation-state in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century can scarcely be exaggerated. From 1866 to 1919 the Liberals held the reins of the government twenty-one times and led the country for thirty-eight years. That period was ‘prepared’ by the diplomatic rearrangement following the Crimean War, which allowed for the peaceful unification of the two Danubian principalities between 1859 and 1863 into a unitary Romanian state.¹⁶⁴ By etatist measures and a firm rule, rather than liberal niceties, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the prince-unifier, and Mihail Kogălniceanu, his prime minister—“the great artisan of the union of the principalities”¹⁶⁵—succeeded in introducing a number of drastic reforms in legislature, land regime, education and administration, which set the framework for the modern nation-state. Kogălniceanu himself was the architect of most of these reforms, including the secularization of the monasteries’ estates (1863) and the Rural Law of 1864, whose adoption, in the face of fierce boyar opposition, was made possible at the cost of a royal coup d’état. The agrarian reform, in fact, was a compromise transferring small plots of the land to the peasants, which resulted not in the overwhelming prevalence of independent rural producers, as in Serbia and Bulgaria, but in the coexistence of large estates and small properties.¹⁶⁶ A growing population and the division of the small plots among descendants, peasant debts and dependence on revenues from working on estates (sometimes described as a “second serfdom”), as well as widespread speculation of land leasers, made the reform almost completely ineffectual in the long term. The plague of the ‘peasant question’ and chronic countryside unrest, culminating in the ‘Great Romanian Peasant Revolt’ of 1907,

¹⁶⁴ The word *Romania* was first used by a Transylvanian Saxon scholar in the eighteenth century. Next to use the term were Greek historians, starting in the early nineteenth century (Baar, *Historians and Nationalism*, 251).

¹⁶⁵ Boia, *History and Myth*, 40.

¹⁶⁶ The size of the plots varied from 3.0 to 7.5 hectares, and peasants were to own their plots after payments to the respective landowners.

would continue to haunt the liberal governments until after the Great War, when they would finally pursue a radical solution.

Genetic similarities with the landed Conservatives aside, it can hardly be argued that the outcome of the land issue was the one pursued by the liberals. A more numerous, viable and above all self-reliant stratum of independent agrarian producers would have fitted better with their social philosophy. As Ion C. Brătianu maintained later, such a stratum would have served as “a bulwark against any turmoil and commotions” and strengthened the “national element.”¹⁶⁷ In the face of violent Conservative opposition, however, a more radical and at the same time peaceful solution seemed unrealistic. The land reform was thus the result of what one socialist critic called “a patriotic agreement over the relations of production in agriculture.”¹⁶⁸

Kogălniceanu's contribution to the founding of the modern Romanian state is comparable, as we will see, to that of Jovan Ristić in Serbia, not solely in scale (or form) but in content and direction as well. Both were indebted for their reformist stances to the Prussian political tradition. Like his paragon Hardenberg, Kogălniceanu professed that, “Lucky is the state which can follow universal developments without the need for violent actions.”¹⁶⁹ That credo played into the hands of both his evolutionism and his social reformism, for as he argued, if the situation of the Romanian Gypsies and peasants was not redressed by emancipation and land appropriation, “violent actions” from below would be inescapable. But it also marked the liberals' general move away from revolutionary radicalism towards a more evolutionist and socially conservative stance coinciding with their rise to power. If, in the 1840s and 1850s, Constantin Rosetti regarded revolution as a natural form of history inherent to social progress, in the late 1860s he definitely downgraded the prospects for continued transformations: “I do not want anybody to believe that we are promoting ‘unlimited’ progress, that we want to get everything immediately. We are well aware of the fact that each age has its own laws and each day has its own tasks.”¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁷ Brătianu, *Discursuri*, vol. 2/1, 58–59; *Acte și cuvîntări*, vol. 6, 154–155.

¹⁶⁸ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea as cited in Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 372.

¹⁶⁹ Cited in Baar, *Historians and Nationalism*, 221.

¹⁷⁰ Cited in Radu Pantazi, ed., *C. A. Rosetti, Gînditorul, Omul* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1969), 240.

The major liberal breakthrough, in the Liberals' own opinion, was the constitution of 1866. It was closely modeled on the Belgian constitution of 1831 and, with a few amendments, lasted until 1938. Certain provisos concerning the actual liberal characteristics of the document need to be made, though. For, as the historian A. Xenopol later argued, it was "a joint achievement of the Conservative and the Liberal parties."¹⁷¹ If the land reform of 1864 doomed the vast majority of the nation to 'neo-serfdom,' the constitution of 1866 effectively excluded this majority from any participation in public life. But while the former could be seen as a necessary compromise with illiberal forces in the name of other liberal goals, the latter more or less fit the liberals' own credo. Unlike their Serbian and Bulgarian counterparts, the Romanian liberals counted in their ranks very few admirers of universal suffrage and the idea of popular sovereignty. Not unlike their Conservative opponents, they were convinced that most Romanians were unprepared for political participation. Access to such participation could be extended only insofar as it could ensure the representative preponderance, not of "sheer numbers," as the liberal newspaper *Românul* referred to the majority of 'immature' Romanians, but of the "intellectual" and urban professions, that is, basically of the liberals themselves. Peasants were thus deprived of political representation and involvement in the decision-making process. No wonder that their dire condition—that of main producers constituting the supposed foundation of a civil society—would be left unsolved and simmering for decades.¹⁷²

Even so, the 1866 Romanian Constitution was a far more liberal document than the Serbian Constitution of 1869 and as such, in the opinion of a latter-day liberal thinker, it had no pedigree in the Romanian tradition.¹⁷³ It was a bourgeois constitution in a country with scarcely any bourgeoisie and political citizenry. It proclaimed national sovereignty under a constitutional monarchy and sanctified the principles of representative government—a strict division of powers, ministerial responsibility to the parliament, limited Crown. The 'right' of political participation aside, all other public rights and freedoms were meticulously listed and guaranteed—this, in the opinion of the liberals, was "the most important

¹⁷¹ Alexandru Xenopol, *Istoria partidelor politice în România*, vol. 1, part 2 (Bucharest: Librăria Stănculescu, 1920), 546.

¹⁷² Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 125–126. At the beginning of the twentieth century, less than 7 percent of the adult male population were direct voters for the Chamber and less than 2 percent for the Senate.

¹⁷³ Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 184–190.

article of the Constitution,” ensuing from the theory of the natural and inalienable rights and meant to nurture enlightened and responsible citizens. In the end, however, what ensured its adoption by a consensus of liberals and conservatives alike was, aside from the exclusion of the peasant representation and the endorsement of an oligarchic parliamentary rule, the fact that it was seen as a real and not just symbolic expression of the sovereignty of the new state, now named Romania. Sporadic outbreaks of rural unrest notwithstanding, prewar Romania never witnessed a drastic challenge to the legitimacy of the regime of the kind the Serbian Radicals would pose to the restrictive liberal order endorsed by the Serbian Constitution of 1869. Having once established, in 1875, their party around the dynamic and zealous group of the most radical among them, the liberals found themselves at the head of an organizational structure able to pursue and enforce their reformist goals.

At the core of their entire platform and government policies was the encouragement—primarily through the instruments and resources of the state—of the nascent Romanian middle class and the nascent urban sectors of Romanian economy. This may be the single most significant difference between the Romanian and the Serbian (and to a large extent also the Bulgarian) liberalisms, from which ensued a number of other differences. The legitimating functions attributed by the Serbian and the Bulgarian liberals to the principle of popular sovereignty were assigned by the Romanian liberals to their identification with the urban entrepreneurial class and modern industry.

This identification was already articulated in the initial, subversive phase of the evolution of Romanian liberalism, when it was still non-institutionalized and in search of broader support. In revolutionary 1848, Ion Ghica, a prominent boyar and moderate liberal, for the first time declared the middle class to be the most progressive segment in Romanian society, one that was rendering the greatest services to the nation, and asserted its political claims and the need to further strengthen it. In a confident liberal style Ion C. Brătianu added shortly afterward that “civilized man is the product of exchange, of trade,” the result of which was to “turn the earth into a paradise, and man into an angel.”¹⁷⁴ What was new about such statements was not only the mission of industry and merchant class; also new was the accompanying ethos, the utilitarian morality of “the

¹⁷⁴ Ion C. Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, vol. 1, part 1 (Bucharest: Ed. Cartea Românească, 1938), 159.

material interest that increases the happiness of the nations” since “the engine of any human activity is love for yourself.” The ethnic-Romanian producers, the sought-after Romanian bourgeoisie—a small minority, even in cities—was thus elevated to the sole legitimate representative of the sovereign people, embodying its civilizing mission, the “new society” and “reborn Romania.” The bourgeoisie, in the words of Ion C. Brătianu, was not

a class but a new society through which the national consciousness, even the genius of Romania, is expressed. [...] It possesses all the qualities of energy and morality that characterize this class in each European society; but it possesses not only the instinct and love for freedom, which is natural for any class with a democratic nature, but also a most elevated, most enthusiastic patriotism. It is above all in the midst of the merchant class that the seed of Romanian civilization resides, and with its extinction alone could civilization and civic liberties in Romania perish.¹⁷⁵

The liberals’ government policy after coming to power in 1876 was thus subordinated to the major objective of boosting the demographic and economic weight of the ethnically Romanian middle class through direct protection, a curtailing of the economic positions of foreigners and a long-term program of nationalization of industry and finance. Their nationalist fight against foreign entrepreneurship, in which they employed all the resources of the new state, was waged over the question not of *how* the Romanian economy should develop but *who* should develop it. In this fight the ethnic-Romanian bourgeoisie did not merely assert its key mission to the country and the nation; in this fight the ethnic-Romanian bourgeoisie was creating itself.

The emancipated urban ‘class’ in the ideology of Romanian liberalism was thus endowed with the meaning which the peasantry had in the Serbian and the Bulgarian liberal nationalisms. It was at once an incarnation of the best qualities of the nation and a driving force of its progress, an indication and a pledge that Romania was intrinsically capable of joining the civilized world. Obviously, this vision suggested little hesitation concerning the applicability of the Western mode of development to Romania, the Western notion of the progressive role of the third estate in particular, and a blatant disregard for its overwhelmingly agrarian profile. Romanian liberalism, unlike the liberalism in the rest of the Balkans at

¹⁷⁵ Cited in Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 192–193. Lovinescu called Ion Brătianu “the true creator of the Romanian bourgeoisie.” Cf. Georgescu, *Istoria ideilor politice*, 101–102.

the time, sought national legitimacy not by claiming conformity with the 'authentic' national structures, institutions and values—that is, with the existing social reality. It did so by attempting to create a completely new basis and, thus, justification of its existence—an ethnic-Romanian bourgeoisie and 'national capitalism'—that is, by creating a completely new social reality. The Romanian liberals were consequently less concerned with adapting liberalism to the peasant identity of the Romanian nation than with a 'transformation' of the nation that would enable it to perform its 'civilizing function' in the East, in compliance with their liberal goals. That brand of social engineering was not an option for the other Balkan liberals, who were constrained to operate within a politically more open, democratically framed system.

Key instruments for the realization of this ambitious program were a strong and highly centralized state and 'good institutions' kept together by a stable political elite capable of transforming the institutional framework of the polity, ensuring accelerated modernization and promoting gradual social reform. The latter, to the Romanian liberals, meant an incremental 'solidarity' between the state and the rural majority and self-improvement through public education and easy access to credit. These, Ionel Brătianu (the son and successor of Ion C. Brătianu) averred, paved the way for political enfranchisement. The state rather than land was to serve as the main economic asset ensuring the liberals' continued pervasive social domination.¹⁷⁶

The motto under which this crusade unfolded was *prin noi înșine*, "by ourselves"—a formula that encapsulated not only Romanian Liberals' protectionist and nationalist concerns but also their belief in self-help as means of social advancement. It meant an economic policy, pursued with the aid of the state institutions, of mobilizing all productive national resources, human and material, against the prevalence of foreigners and their capital in the Romanian economy. For, as Ion C. Brătianu warned, a nation conquered by arms kept its right to freedom, but if it was "conquered by economic means, it is destroyed forever, legally as well as factually." The 'life-saving' policy, as the Liberals saw it, was the creation of a state-protected national industry, barring foreigners from trade, and defense for the properties of "local owners."¹⁷⁷ During their twelve-year administration between 1876 and 1888, they passed a series of protectionist

¹⁷⁶ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 373, 375–376.

¹⁷⁷ Brătianu, *Acte și cuvîntări*, vol. 1, 249–250; vol. 2, part 1, 159.

laws on tariffs, industries and transportation. Together with several national credit institutions, the National Bank of Romania, founded and managed by Liberal ‘bosses,’ became a powerful instrument for strengthening the positions of the Romanian entrepreneurs and ‘nationalizing’ the urban middle class. The takeover of the party leadership by the group of ‘young Liberals’ headed by Ionel Brătianu in 1909 signaled the victory of the zealous modernizer-nationalists with powerful positions in the civil service and the state financial institutions over the older generation of land-based party leaders.

All this revolved around one central value that Ion C. Brătianu used to evoke consistently and that his successor at the head of the Liberal Party again conceded in retrospect: “The National Liberal Party,” noted Ionel Brătianu in 1905,

was not born as a spontaneous and theoretical entity, as a mere scholarly conception. . . . The National Liberal Party emerged as the expression of a real and major need of our state and people. It was constantly the agency that fulfilled Romania’s vital necessities and the first need it had to respond to, the one that preceded and encompassed all others, the one from which it took even its national-liberal name, was the need to warrant the national existence of the Romanians.¹⁷⁸

In a clear-cut fashion Ion G. Duca would later summarize that the Liberal Party of Romania “embraces all forms of nationalism”—theoretical, cultural and economic.¹⁷⁹

“National existence” could mean many things, but in the Liberals’ vocabulary it meant, in essence, the assimilation of not only the liberal doctrine and institutions but also the major social issues into a system of “national priorities.” “Let us leave aside the land issue,” Ion C. Brătianu counseled, “let us first try to reconcile the enlightened spirits in the two parties [the Liberal and the Conservative]; to first create the needed institutions and when it comes to the solving of the land issue, let us solve it in such a way as would lead to the regeneration of Romania and not threaten our national existence.”¹⁸⁰ So national unity and political consolidation in the name of “national existence” and building of the state *before* considering the question of the land—these were the priorities of the most radical in the Liberal camp. This policy, proceeding from an eminently

¹⁷⁸ Cited in Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 378.

¹⁷⁹ Ion G. Duca, “Doctrina liberală,” in Dimitrie Gusti et al., *Doctrinile partidelor politice. 19 prelegeri publice* (Bucharest: Editura Națională, n.d. [1923]), 103–105.

¹⁸⁰ Cited in Lovinescu, *Istoria civilizației*, 194.

nationalistic ranking of social and political priorities, helps explain what one student of rural Romania defined as “the close and unambiguous connection between the rise of the national state and the social decline of the peasantry.”¹⁸¹

The question of political equality and participation was tackled from similar positions. If all Romanian Liberals agreed that for the people to be inspired by a “single goal . . . a single will: patriotism,” as Kogălniceanu put it, they should have equal access to the country’s wealth and rights, and if Ion C. Brătianu believed that “the flag of nationality, freedom and democracy is one,” this was not meant to imply that the defense of that flag could be entrusted to the nation itself. Because “the gun and the vote [are] powerful weapons” which, if used “in an unenlightened way,” could endanger the whole society.¹⁸² Small wonder that after 1866 the Liberals abandoned any reference to universal suffrage; unlike in Serbia and Bulgaria, democratic citizenship remained the distant outcome of, not a vehicle toward, the fulfillment of the national idea.

The “foreigners,” above all the Jews, also became an issue in view of the anxiety to secure the prevalence of Romanians in the key sectors of the economy that the liberals considered crucial for their ambitious project of modernization.¹⁸³ Given their nationalist logic, the liberals came out as opponents to Jewish emancipation—a stance flagrantly inconsistent with their previous pronouncements about the ‘natural rights’ and equality of humans. Kogălniceanu, who had previously fought for the emancipation of the Gypsies, now argued that if certain rights were denied to Jews, Bulgarians and Armenians, this was not out of principle but because of their greater numbers.¹⁸⁴ The actual meaning of this change was made crystal-clear when he urged the Parliament, during the debates on the politics of nationalization of Dobrudja, “to make national laws before making liberal ones”—a declaration that some authors rightly interpret as marking “the eclipse of an era in which liberalism and nationalism could happily coexist.”¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ David Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant in Romania: The War and Agrarian Reform (1917–1921)* (London: Humphrey Milford and Oxford University Press; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 568.

¹⁸² Mihail Kogălniceanu, *Discursuri parlamentare din epoca Unirii* (Bucharest: Editura Științifică, 1959), 28–45; Brătianu, *Acte și cuvântări*, vol. 2, 1, 217–218.

¹⁸³ See William Oldson, *A Providential Anti-Semitism: Nationalism and Polity in Nineteenth Century Romania* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1991), 139–164.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁸⁵ Constantin Iordachi, *Citizenship, Nation and State-Building: The Integration of Northern Dobrogea into Romania, 1878–1913* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 26; Baar, *Historians and Nationalism*, 270.

So, nation-building in an oligarchic mode and social conservatism—these were the hallmarks of the liberalism ruling Romania. It was only under the pressure of the war and the cautionary example of the 1917 Russian Revolution that the Romanian Liberals set out to enfranchise the Romanians and implement a sweeping agrarian reform as yet another revolution from above—in the hope that they could “tame and turn [it] to their advantage”¹⁸⁶ as successfully as they did the preceding ones.

An early but prophetic indication of the direction that Serbian liberalism was about to take in the coming decades occurred in 1858, during the St. Andrew's Day Assembly—the occasion when the liberals made their dramatic appearance as a coherent and independent group on the Serbian political scene. They were willing, even eager, to collaborate with the reinstated autocratic government of the Obrenović dynasty, sanctioned by the Assembly. They hoped to thus strengthen the dynasty's hand in pursuing a militantly irredentist policy and completing the liberation and unification of the Serbs still under Ottoman domination. Their subsequent return to opposition was as much the result of Prince Mihailo's distaste for a ‘peasant-reared’ liberalism as of his failure to fulfill the national mission that the liberals had bestowed on him. Meanwhile, though, they left little doubt that their original program and principles were anything but irretrievable.

Despite their theoretical fertility—in championing national sovereignty or preaching romantic conservatism and national harmony—the Serbian liberals proved unable to acquire a substantial social base. The Serbian peasant's passive attitude to their agenda pushed them further away from “the People” while at the same time boosting their missionary and paternalistic proclivities. “Nationality became the idol of the new generation,” wrote Jovan Skerlić, “the only God, in front of whose altar it ignited incense and prostrated itself.” But “its patriotism was historical and archaeological; it built the edifice of the future on the graves of the past . . .”¹⁸⁷ The liberals did not receive support from the Serbian village, either in the 1860s or later, because they had no social program and because the program they had—representative government and political freedom—was too abstract.¹⁸⁸ In time it was becoming increasingly important for them not to introduce social and economic reforms but to cultivate the Serbs' national consciousness. Meanwhile, their populist statements and

¹⁸⁶ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 382.

¹⁸⁷ Jovan Skerlić, *Omladina i njena književnost (1848–1871)* (Belgrade: Napredak, 1925), 160, 165.

¹⁸⁸ Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, 113.

actual policies drifted apart. The Anglophile Stojan Bošković, while arguing, in the vein of Jovanović, that the Anglo-Saxons' and the Slavs' public and communal life had similar features, simultaneously demanded that the introduction of parliamentarism in Serbia proceed gradually and cautiously. He also objected to ministerial responsibility on the grounds that the Serbs were not mature enough for it. Although fully in line with stock liberal precepts, such policies sat uneasily with the concurrent theory about the indigenous Serbian parliamentary tradition.¹⁸⁹

The political crises that followed the assassination of Prince Mihailo in 1868 offered the liberals the chance to once again attain political weight far exceeding their actual strength and to announce their goals publicly. This time their intervention would have far more sweeping consequences. In the short term the most significant of these was the constitution of 1869, whose actual architect was Jovan Ristić—one of the three regents of the underage Milan Obrenović, whose motto was "The road to liberty is paved with moderation and not extremes."¹⁹⁰ Domestically Ristić backed the idea of liberal reform of Serbia's political system in the spirit and with the institutions of a Prussian-type *Rechtsstaat*. His foreign policy was guided by aspirations for national unification on the model of Italy and Germany and national sovereignty. In other words, the political strategy that Ristić applied to the Serbian 'liberalism in power' was the strategy of nationalism and moderate liberal reformism. This strategy, and not the ideas of a *bona fide* representative government, was what the new constitution was meant to serve—a product not of a social movement but of the aspirations, above all those associated with nation-building, of a handful of graduates of foreign universities.

With this 'Regency Constitution,' the one Serbian basic law of liberals' making, which would remain in force for the next twenty years, Serbia was endowed with constitutional but not parliamentary rule. The parliament's control over the government (and the budget) was restricted; next to the prince, the representation was bestowed legislative power, but unable to propose laws, while the government, which was to be nominated by the prince rather than elected by the majority of deputies, was accountable to the royal head, not the parliament. Although every taxpaying citizen was entitled to vote (openly, and in the villages indirectly), one-quarter of

¹⁸⁹ Stojan Bošković, "Prva zakonotvorna skupština" (1863), cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 657–658.

¹⁹⁰ Cited in Ress, *The Value System of Serb Liberalism*, 358.

the members of parliament were appointed by the prince.¹⁹¹ This rather unusual solution ensued from the liberals' awareness that their 'democratism,' despite rhetoric to the contrary, was not enough to ensure the peasants' votes for them, while they all agreed that the intelligentsia, to which they themselves belonged, should be duly represented in the parliament.¹⁹² The constitution contained all standard civil rights, as well as the freedom of the press, but they were not guaranteed—they could even be temporarily revoked "in case of a danger to public security." Municipal government and the independence of the judiciary were not addressed in the basic law.¹⁹³

In brief, the Constitution of 1869, though a significant improvement on that of 1838, left the Assembly at the mercy of the executive. In many respects it was far removed from Jovanović's project of democratic liberalism. As a compromise document it satisfied none of the groups in the political elite, and it is not surprising that in the following two decades much of Serbian politics would revolve around the issue of its modification. Despite the lukewarm assessments it deserves, this constitution had one major virtue: it provided the framework that made possible the public discussions and the appearance of an initially timid yet soon organized opposition.¹⁹⁴ In other words, it laid the grounds for the emergence of parliamentary politics in Serbia. From then on the process of political development gathered momentum—or, to paraphrase the title of a study of

¹⁹¹ There is no data on the size of the electoral body as a proportion of the population, as stipulated by this constitution. Under the 1888 and 1903 constitutions, this share was around 20 percent (see Holm Sundhaussen, *Historische Statistik Serbiens, 1834–1914* [Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1989], 596–597), which is comparable to that in other countries with general (male) suffrage at the time. Since the electoral provisions of the 1888 Constitution were not changed much, it is reasonable to infer that the size of the Serbian electorate under the 1869 Constitution was close to this percentage.

¹⁹² Svetozar Miletić made the proposal of "electing" one-fourth of the deputies from among the intelligentsia as an alternative to the introduction of a second chamber or corporatist representation: Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 659.

¹⁹³ For more on the clauses and the nature of the constitution, see Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka i struja*, vol. 1, 185–202; Jovanović, *Političke i pravne rasprave*, vol. 1, 28–37, 155–157.

¹⁹⁴ Most of the assessments of the twenty years the "Regency Constitution" describe it as a period of repressive and almost absolutist rule by Prince Milan and the two governing parties, the Liberal and the Progressive, a regime in which the Assembly had almost no importance. Recently published parliamentary debates, however, present a rather different picture of lively, often seriously prepared and well-argued parliamentary debates taking place around all major issues. See Nikola Pašić *u Narodnoj skupštini*, vols. 1–4, eds. Latinka Perović, Dubravka Stojanović and Đorđe Đ. Stanković, (Belgrade: Službeni list SFR, 1997); cf. Olga Popović-Obradović, "Ka kritičkoj istoriografiji," *Tokovi istorije*, 1998, nos. 1–4, 221–222.

the Serbian parties, if there was development in late-nineteenth-century Serbia, it was in politics.¹⁹⁵

The liberals' long-term success in Serbian political life was to establish the nation as the real sovereign—the subject of political capacity. As in Romania, this enabled them to assume the role of the 'nation's representatives,' which implied substituting the promotion of Serbia's emancipatory and unifying mission for the cultivation of a national citizenry. At no point, not even in the midst of the major Eastern crisis of 1876–1878, did they make any effort to mobilize the electorate. Instead they chose to stake their efforts on the strong personality of Jovan Ristić, whose understanding of liberty and parliamentarism was not democratic but moderately liberal. Ristić respected the independence of the judiciary, the freedom of the press and the responsibility of the government, but above all else he respected the law and the legal state. It was from this position that he used to warn against an Assembly prone to "create a democratic tyranny," unable to "resist demagogic cravings for power and even less to raise its voice against the most fierce despotisms of all, the despotism of the majority without responsibility."¹⁹⁶ But Ristić's greatest merit was his determination to see a Serbia as independent and strong as it could be. It was these priorities that ultimately determined the attitude of the majority of the Liberals to the truncated constitution—they accepted it not because it was liberal but because it was national, crafted by a national assembly and asserting the country's "foreign independence."¹⁹⁷ But they also accepted it because it was thought to ensure, as Stojan Bošković put it, the "gradual political and material development of the state" and forestall conflicts that might endanger the country's stability. The Serbian liberals, much like the Romanian liberals, were political reformers to the extent that they were nationalists. They set the Serbian nation, respectively the National Assembly, on a pedestal, as that could legitimate their 'right' to act on its behalf and govern in accordance with their modernizing goals. But they had serious doubts about the actual capacity of the people—meaning in this case something far more concrete than the abstract

¹⁹⁵ The reference is to Gale Stokes, *Politics as Development. The Emergence of Political Parties in Nineteenth-Century Serbia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1990).

¹⁹⁶ Jovan Ristić, *Zakonitost* (Belgrade, 1860), cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 372.

¹⁹⁷ The major achievement of the constitution, according to Vladimir Jovanović, was that it represented the first attempt at achieving "the constitutional independence of Serbia, the right by which the people in Serbia are really sovereign to grant themselves a constitution and to change and perfect it as they best know how" (cited in Stokes, *Legitimacy through Liberalism*, 161–162).

nation—to govern itself, which was why they chose to stake everything on a bureaucratic regime.¹⁹⁸ What was ‘national’ in their opinion was their own control of the state, which they exercised on behalf of the nation, not the share of the illiterate majority of that nation in the political society. They even left the restrictive municipality law in force and were inclined to curb the political freedoms of their opponents and to practice a sort of ‘liberal,’ or as the socialist critic Svetozar Marković called it, ‘constitutional dictatorship.’¹⁹⁹

In many respects, therefore, this second generation of Serbian liberals, who entered the government and civil service en masse after 1868, definitively tipped the scales in their ideology and practice towards nationalism. Hardly anyone surpassed them, then or later, in the desire to win a truly independent and respectable position for Serbia. Under their leadership Serbia waged two wars against the Ottoman Empire—in 1876 and 1878—and the recognition of the Serbian state’s formal independence in 1878 was their great feat. But, convinced in their mission to guard the true, properly understood national interests, the Serbian liberals felt little need to heed the opinions of this ‘peasant nation’ or to teach it the meaning of belonging to the nation. (This need would be realized by others—their opponents from the ‘left,’ the National Radicals—and their shrewdness would be abundantly rewarded.) Once they were out of power (1880), their claim to represent the nation proved hollow: in the next twenty years the polls would not bring them back to office. In the early 1880s, therefore, the historical role of the Liberals in Serbian political life was over. Henceforth it would be the Progressives who claimed to be the standard-bearers for true liberal values.

“The younger and generally more active forces of the former so-called conservative party united with the younger forces of the so-called liberal party around a program, the main part of which will be the fight against

¹⁹⁸ “But experience has indicated that voters are not always and everywhere as informed, competent and active in electing deputies and controlling state affairs as they should be,” Jovanović concluded in 1885; Vladimir Jovanović, *Glasnik Srpskog učenog društva* 60 (1885), 214–218, cited in Bataković, Vladimir Jovanović, 162.

¹⁹⁹ By the mid-1880s Jovanović himself had moved in the direction of social Darwinism, applying the “struggle for life” to explain social and international relationships. His earlier claims of cultural-historical continuity had given way to organic sociological theories, most notably Herbert Spencer’s theory of evolution. In the end, the only basis on which he could envisage international alliances was that of (the Slav) race, while predicating the social and international “survival of the fittest” on economic and cultural superiority: V. Jovanović, “Društvena i međunarodna borba za opstanak” (1885), 210–233; cited in Ress, *The Value System of Serb Liberalism*, 364.

pseudo-liberalism and sincere work for the promotion of modern, truly liberal public foundations,” wrote Stojan Novaković in the first issue of the Progressive newspaper *Videlo* in January 1880.²⁰⁰ “The young and active forces” were the cream of the Serbian intelligentsia at the time; they rejected as “pseudo-liberalism” the Liberals’ ill-suited attempt to build a concept of the modern state on a theory of a nation consisting of a backward peasantry and to entwine Serbia’s patriarchal traditions with the norms of Western constitutionalism. For them it was a romantic hallucination to believe that, by virtue of his primitive democracy and traditional love for freedom, the Serbian peasant was predisposed to accept Western political values and institutions without major shocks and adapt them to his needs, and that the peasant traditions were inherently progressive and had to be safeguarded. On the contrary, Serbian political culture had to be released from its patriarchal restraints and raised to the level of a genuine civilization, while the Serbian peasant ‘bequeathed from the past’ needed to turn into an autonomous person with guaranteed rights and freedoms, that is, a Serbian citizen. The Serbs could civilize themselves only if they adopted the modern institutions in their original, Western form. In the words of the Progressives’ party program, they sought “to make from our patriarchal country a modern European state.”²⁰¹ Their institutional ideal was a qualified representative system, not democracy. They clearly distinguished between, and even contrasted, parliamentary order and democracy, and they considered popular sovereignty an impediment to the stable legal state that they sought. The Progressives, Slobodan Jovanović wrote, were more liberal but less democratic than the Liberals.²⁰²

The means by which these ‘Serbian Whigs’ hoped to achieve their “true liberalism” were first enumerated in their 1881 program, whose three leading principles were “law, freedom and progress.”²⁰³ Their views on gov-

²⁰⁰ Vasilije Krešić and Radoš Ljušić, *Programi i statuti srpskih političkih stranaka do 1918. godine* (Belgrade: Književne novine, 1991), 109. The first issue of *Videlo* appeared on January 14, 1880.

²⁰¹ Cited in Prodanović, *Istorija političkih stranaka*, 445.

²⁰² See Stokes, *Politics as Development*, 179–183; Slobodan Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, vol. 2 (Belgrade: Beogradski izdavačko-grafički zavod, 1990), 66–68; Dubravka Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija 1903–1914* (Belgrade: Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2003), 142–148.

²⁰³ This platform also postulated the rule of law, freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly and association, inviolability of one’s person, constitutionally guaranteed ministerial liability and independence of the judges and a broad municipal self-government. In the name of the country’s rapid progress, it also called for a number of modern reforms in education, the economy, finances, taxation and military training.

ernment were set forth in their most complete form in a draft for a new constitution of 1883. There civil rights, considerably extended and guaranteed, and greater independence of the legislature from the executive coexisted with proposals for the introduction of *censitaire* constituencies and a Senate, to which access would be given to the well-off, the higher civil service and the intelligentsia. As one of the Progressive leaders, Milan Piroćanac, put it, “what is essential is to secure the precedence of intellect over sheer numbers,”²⁰⁴ a concern fully consonant with that of the contemporary Romanian liberals. These views, which resonated with the dominant practiced forms of European liberalism at the time, did not remain only on paper. The Progressives saw many of them through to legislation with enviable speed and courage at the beginning of their seven-year administration between 1880 and 1887. Their laws on the press, meetings and associations (which made possible the formal existence of political parties), the independence of judges, obligatory and free primary education, the establishment of a regular army, the founding of a National Bank, and reforms of taxation equipped Serbia with many of the institutions and the norms of modern statehood.

This legislative activity, impressive in its ambition and scale, was motivated by a considerable dose of nationalism, but a nationalism that differed from that of the nominal Serbian Liberals. On the one hand, the Progressives sought to turn Serbia “from a patriarchal into a modern European state,” not by relying on pre-modern popular traditions but by forging a new—civic—national identity for the Serbs. On the other hand, their nationalism, unlike that of the Liberals, emphasized domestic freedoms and welfare rather than Serbia’s irredentist goals; their conviction was that “the country’s politics ought to be based first and foremost on the domestic politics of freedom.”²⁰⁵ The question of “law and [domestic] freedom,” moreover, was closely linked with the “affirmation of the independence of the Serbian nation”: through its government the Serbian

²⁰⁴ Jaša Prodanović, *Ustavni razvitak i ustavne borbe u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Geca Kon, n.d. [1936]), 255–265; *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. 6, part 1, 36–37.

²⁰⁵ “The country is in a process of full political development. . . . This fight is a sign of life and political health. . . . All political ideas are equal before the law. . . . All have the right to enter an open contest and be presented to the people,” read the instructions of the minister of the interior, Milutin Garašanin, to the district heads concerning the forthcoming general elections in 1880 (cited in Živan Živanović, *Politička istorija Srbije u drugoj polovini devetnaestog veka* [Belgrade: Geca Kon, 1925], II, 157). This is a remarkable position, considering that until that time political meetings had never been allowed, and political associations had been prohibited. The elections of November 1880 were probably the freest in the country’s nineteenth-century history. See Stokes, *Politics as Development*, 190, 192.

nation would show to the world that “once it had won and received its full independence from abroad, it knows how to make use of full freedom at home.”²⁰⁶

All that had a great deal to do with liberal doctrinarism, but very little with the peasant preoccupations. The Progressives’ reforms, especially those which sent children to school and men into the army, were as indispensable for a modern state as they were unpopular, precisely because they ruined the traditional order of things.²⁰⁷ The reformist experience of the Serbian Progressives is particularly illuminating in this respect, as it indicates the limit to which a modernizing government—in the context of an already open political system—could count on success without seeking to mobilize a broad enough support for its unpopular policies. Having been confronted with a fierce political opposition from a new, populist-radical elite capable of mobilizing the peasant vote, within few years the Progressives ended up at the mercy of the royal court. The abdication of King Milan in 1887 also signaled the abdication of this once “Progressive” Party, which disintegrated in 1897 only to reappear again in 1906—not as a threat to the electoral hegemony of the Popular-Radicals but as their principled, elitist and marginal ideological opponent.

The fate of the Serbian Popular-Liberal movement in the Dual Monarchy proved no better. The shift in Hungarian state policy in favor of increasing repression against the subject nationalities since the mid-1870s, combined with the economic upsurge in the Monarchy as a whole but especially in its Hungarian part, had a twofold effect on the Serbian liberal-national movement. On the one hand, it made the propaganda on behalf of the Serbian national program increasingly difficult and ineffective: Miletić himself was twice imprisoned, and the number of Serbian deputies in the Hungarian Parliament fell, within only two decades, from six to a maximum of two. At the same time, the increase in the number of Serbs benefiting from the economic growth in the empire led to a division very similar to that which the Bulgarian movement suffered in the Ottoman Empire prior to the establishment of the state. The well-to-do Serbs were content with the cultural autonomy they had been enjoying and sought cooperation with the Hungarian liberal government. At the other extreme were the radical nationalists, the socialists, clamoring for a

²⁰⁶ Cited in Latinka Perović, “Usredsređenost na nacionalno oslobođenje i ujedinjenje” (foreword), in *Nikola Pašić u Narodnoj skupštini*, vol. 1, 37.

²⁰⁷ Jovanović, *Vlada Milana Obrenovića*, II, 382.

national *and* social revolution as the two indivisible sides of the genuine emancipation. Under the combined pressure of these two extremes, the national-romantic version of Serbian liberalism and its zealous crusaders, Svetozar Miletić “and Co.,” faded into history. After it had seriously mutated under the weight of government in Serbia proper, from the mid-1880s national liberalism ceased to play a major role among the Serbs in Hungary.

Between the establishment of the autonomous Principality in 1878 and the mid-1880s, there existed in Bulgaria, as in Serbia, two rival liberal currents, respectively two rival liberal parties: classical liberal (called Conservative) and liberal-democratic (called Liberal). During that period these were the two major political camps in the country with roots in the pre-liberation division between ‘moderates’ (evolutionists) and ‘extremists’ (liberal revolutionaries). The first clash between them occurred during the debates in the Constituent Assembly of 1879, when they laid down, for the first time in a more coherent and comprehensive way, their views on the arrangement of the new state. The clash actually concerned two issues: whether to establish a second chamber, and whether to introduce a qualified suffrage. Paying tribute to the egalitarian dispositions of the majority of deputies, the Conservatives recommended the second chamber, not as a “house of privilege” but as a “regulator in the work of the popular representation.” As regards franchise, they believed that someone who could not write down his name and read the constitution “should not be involved in the government” of the state.²⁰⁸ These positions were barely conservative; rather they were an expression of, as one observer put it, “the influence of the political ideas prevailing in Europe at the time.”²⁰⁹

The Liberals, however, put up uncompromising resistance to any constraint on democratic freedom and sovereignty. They insisted on general suffrage with no restrictions, a single-chamber parliament with broad prerogatives, and the full set of guaranteed personal and civil freedoms. Their arguments thereof drew heavily on the ‘intrinsic democratic instinct’ of the Bulgarians and their traditions of self-rule under the Ottomans. Such a line of reasoning turned out to be the strongest weapon they had for countering the Conservatives’ basic contention, namely that although

²⁰⁸ *Protokolite*, 252–256; Yordanka Gesheva, “Ideologiya i programi na konservativnata partiya (1879–1886),” *Istoricheski pregled* 42, no. 3 (1986), 36.

²⁰⁹ Simeon Radev, *Stroitelite na savremenna Balgariya*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Balgarski pisatel, 1973; first published 1910), 74. “The very organization of the Western European states was for them a great lesson in conservatism,” Radev added.

unrestricted political participation was not inherently bad, it was inappropriate for a largely illiterate and inexperienced rural nation. Ten years earlier Svetozar Miletić had argued in a similar vein that an upper chamber made sense only in countries where there was an aristocracy or class tensions. In Serbia (as in Bulgaria) such an institution was redundant and, in general, there was no reason to restrict in any way popular sovereignty which, in his view, “was and remains a Slavic and Serbian theory.”²¹⁰ All this, on the other hand, fitted nicely with the Liberals’ faith in freedom as training for the culture of liberty, as they believed that only the actual employment of freedom was what made people capable of freedom.

In a practical institutional sense, the equalitarian patriarchal political culture, which the liberals themselves helped redeem, precluded the need for checks on the ‘sovereignty’ of the Assembly other than the extensive powers of the monarch. For the Bulgarians to achieve “a strong and sound government,” Petko R. Slaveykov maintained, there should be no barriers between it and the governed: “the people should be in direct relation to the government.” All the conventional arguments of contemporary European constitutionalism in favor of a second chamber were disqualified one by one, by virtue of one basic credo that Slaveykov himself summarized:

It is insulting for a whole nation to accept the biased judgment of its complete inability and, so to say, incompetence to deal with the national affairs and to accept as able and competent just a few privileged persons . . . One of the most common delusions of mankind is that every person should think of himself as being smarter and better than the others and that the others . . . need his intelligence and leadership . . . Individual leaders, however smart and enlightened they may be, are much more liable to get things wrong than the maturely heeded collective or popular opinion.²¹¹

This line of contention was not exactly liberal but clearly democratic. It was characteristic of the underlying philosophy of that populist version of liberalism that was to prevail among the Bulgarian Liberals after the establishment of the state.

Even so, the Tărnovo Constitution, which was to remain in force until after World War II, ended up as a liberal rather than a populist manifesto. It contained a number of liberal-democratic provisions, including

²¹⁰ Svetozar Miletić, “Reforme u Srbiji,” *Zastava* (March–April 1869), cited in Bešlin, *Evropski uticaji*, 658–659.

²¹¹ *Protokolite na Uchreditelnoto Narodno Săbranie v Tărnovo* (Plovdiv etc., 1879), 265–266. “Leave the people alone to seek the cures for the ailments they feel, and rest assured that they will waste no time in finding them and applying them,” added Slaveykov.

universal manhood suffrage and a single chamber (two rare institutional innovations at the time), as well as the prohibition of all titles, extensive civil liberties and ministerial liability, which provided the institutional framework for the exercise of modern government and citizenship.

The aforementioned divergences of opinion notwithstanding, the constitutional debates highlighted a sufficiently broad zone of political consensus between the two liberal camps as regards the liberal-democratic institutions and principles, which, on the level of political values and theory at least, would persist as a characteristic feature of the Bulgarian political scene in the following decades. The explanation for this has everything to do with the nationalist ideal of the modern state. The liberals of both camps shared the belief that the liberal-democratic institutions could help cultivate a feeling of belonging to a common political home, personal self-identification with the state and a willingness to participate in its affairs—in brief, to cultivate ‘nationals.’ Moreover, they were convinced, like Vladimir Jovanović was before them, that freedoms and good government “will make the small Bulgarian principality a point of attraction and unification for the torn-off parts of the common Bulgarian fatherland,” a “Piedmont among the other parts of Bulgaria in the Balkan peninsula.”²¹² In the Bulgarian case, too, the principles of liberal government—the aspiration for “a second Belgium on the Balkans”—were firmly linked to irredentism.

Between 1879 and 1886, Liberals and Conservatives rotated at the head of government amid international uncertainties and domestic agitation. The first Bulgarian prince, Alexander of Battenberg, who considered the constitution “ridiculously liberal,” attempted, between 1881 and 1883, to rule with decrees and against the Liberals. Although the attempt failed in the face of growing liberal opposition, it sowed the seeds for a new, international dispute. The ‘Bulgarian crisis’ of 1886–1887 came to a head as a result of Russia’s refusal to recognize the unification of the former Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia with the Bulgarian principality (1885), its demand for Prince Alexander’s dethronement, and plans for amendment of the constitution. What was at stake, therefore, was not simply Bulgarian-Russian relations but the internal organization of the state and the national sovereignty.

²¹² *Programi, programni dokumenti i ustavi na burzhoaznite partii v Bălgariya 1879–1918*, compiled by Veska Nikolova and Dimităr Szdov (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1992), 22; *Vitosha*, nos. 1 and 3, May 30 and June 6, 1879; Stefan Balamezov, “Deloto na nashite uchrediteli v svetlinata na dнешnoto vreme,” *Rodina* 1, no. 4 (1938–1939), 98, 109.

It was under such circumstances that in 1887 Stefan Stambolov (1854–1895), a former revolutionary and member of the Liberal Party, set up an authoritarian regime (dubbed a “dictatorship” at the time) that lasted until 1894. The *raison d’être* of the regime was the suppression, at all cost and by all means, of the Russophile groups among both the Conservatives and the Liberals, fending off Russia’s attempts at instigating unrest and intervening in domestic affairs, and stabilizing the crown after the accession of the new Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg Gotha. In the name of these national priorities, the government passed through the purged parliament several illiberal laws (of the press, the police and the elimination of banditry), which violated the civil liberties consecrated by the constitution without suspending the constitution itself. Through rigged elections, violence and administrative pressure, the parliament was turned into an obedient instrument of the cabinet, while the only parties that were allowed legal existence were those espousing ‘Russophobe’ stances. Years later the Serbian Progressives used the term “Stambolovism” (*stambulovština*) to describe the hypocritical regime of the ruling Popular Radicals in Serbia, meaning a system where all democratic rights existed on paper but where “a particular organization of government can make a sad and shameful mockery of these liberal laws. . . . Formally this kind of regime is quite liberal; in reality it is the negation of freedom.”²¹³

Such a policy shift was predictable under the circumstances, at least to the extent that, as political scientists have long contended, the nation as a subject of international law always takes precedence over the nation as a community of citizens.²¹⁴ But Stambolov made no ideology of his rule. Not only was he careful to leave the constitution formally in force, but he also took care to present the precedence of national sovereignty as intrinsic to the authentic liberal credo. On behalf of the same hierarchy of values, again, he launched an ambitious and wide-ranging program of modernization marked by a series of laws for the protection of the national industry and trade (a policy that his liberal successors would continue); the opening of a national university; implementation of the constitutional provision for obligatory and free education; legal codification in the fields of the civil, commercial and procedural law; development of communications and administration; and so on. It was this policy

²¹³ “Stambulovština,” *Videlo*, November 22, 1907, cited in Stojanović, *Srbija i demokratija*, 359–360.

²¹⁴ Barbu and Preda, *Building the State from the Roof Down*, 381–382.

of rigorous etatist modernization and nationalism that ensured the relative longevity of the regime, despite its confrontationist stance on other issues. Having exhausted its potential to justify its repressive character with nationalist arguments, it was peacefully ousted by the united forces of Russophiles, Russophobes and the prince.

The reinstatement of the conventional parliamentary mechanisms of government provided the framework that made possible the emergence of a multi-party system—four left-wing parties in opposition and five liberal or liberal-democratic parties, which alternated in government, alone or in coalition. As in Romania, the Bulgarian liberals and their parties invariably billed themselves as representatives of “the whole nation.” Their party appellations and programs sought symbolic association with the ‘people’ and the ideals of liberty, democracy and progress. Their domestic policies differed slightly; the one divergence of principle concerned foreign-policy orientation and the tactics for handling the ‘national question,’ that is, the ‘incomplete’ national unification. In his opening parliamentary speech as prime minister of the first post-Stambolovist government (1894–1899), Konstantin Stoilov, a former member of the Conservative (moderate-liberal) Party and a founder of its successor, the People’s Party (1894), stated: “Small states like Bulgaria should realize that their strength resides not in their external but in their internal policy. . . . Such states are strengthened by their liberal institutions, by the order that reigns in them; they are strong when they are a center of progress, a center of civil justice and of freedom.”²¹⁵ The program of the National Liberal Party seven years later (1911) says almost the same: “In order to earn for itself the place to which it is called among the other states, Bulgaria should be strong with its exemplary arrangement, with its armed forces, with its culture and economy and thus lead the way of social progress.”²¹⁶

There were three main aspects of this “exemplary arrangement.” First, there was a general consensus that the constitution should be “kept sacred and inviolable”—a principle that was ardently upheld in theory rather than in reality. Second, even the most democratically oriented in the liberal camp, who pursued the cultivation of an active citizenry and advocated the “political education of the people in the spirit of democracy,”

²¹⁵ Dr. Konstantin Stoilov, *Rechi* (Sofia: T.F. Chipev, 1939), 79. Stoilov also added: “I have always believed that, on the Balkan peninsula, Bulgaria in its internal policy should follow the example of Belgium as one [such] progressive country. We should also follow the example of Belgium in [our] foreign policy” (83).

²¹⁶ *Programi, programni dokumenti*, 100–101.

like the Democratic Party, sought the means for such education in the instruments typically used for 'educating Bulgarians': the "principle of the armed people . . . , general, compulsory and free primary education under the control of the state, the institutions in the country . . ." ²¹⁷ Third, there was unanimous support from all liberal parties for the state's interference in the economy. The "comprehensive encouragement of the local industrial production" was deemed indispensable not only on account of the industry's potential to "boost the general development of culture and social progress," but also because it was meant to free "the internal market from foreign economic domination" and ensure "national protection against the aspiration of the interested industrial and capitalist nations to turn the country into their colony or treat it as such." ²¹⁸

However, the actual operation of the political (parliamentary) system after the abolishment of Stambolov's restrictive legislation and the formal liberalization of the regime was far from the standards evoked in the Liberals' public pronouncements and programs. In reality, the country's parliamentary system was based on small popular participation and a strongly centralized state controlled by a handful of modernizing professional politicians. Sometimes called 'oligarchic parliamentary rule,' this system meant that active politics was the exclusive trade of a small number of people who managed to maintain a liberal, pluralistic system of presentation (with the usual civil liberties), while at the same time keeping the vast majority of the population excluded from the political process. ²¹⁹ The means for achieving this exclusion in the case of Bulgaria, where suffrage was universal, lay in the ability of local party partisans or civil servants to control votes through fraud, coercion or other forms of political manipulation. The same system was operating in Serbia, where the Progressives intended to formalize it in law, and in Romania through the effective exclusion of the vast majority of Romanians from politics by a qualified vote.

Parliamentary oligarchy attained its purest form during what was known as the "personal regime" of Prince (beginning in 1908 King) Ferdinand I at the beginning of the twentieth century. Instead of the constitutional mechanism of cabinet rotation, the governments alternated at the will of the royal head: he forced them to resign and appointed a new cabinet

²¹⁷ Ibid., 219–221.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 104, 230 (see also 144, 233–234, 376).

²¹⁹ Nicos Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery: Early Parliamentarism and Late Industrialisation in the Balkans and Latin America* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 3.

that obtained the needed parliamentary majority through administrative or police pressure. Without destroying the framework of parliamentary democracy, Ferdinand thus succeeded in establishing his control over the system. Yet the main culprit was the governmental—that is, the liberal—parties themselves, as it was their weakness and disunion that made possible their manipulation in the first place. Lacking broader social support, they saw themselves forced to rely on the court and practice corruption and patronage, thus adding to the political apathy of the electorate.

From around the middle of the first decade of the new century, however, most of the liberal parties (and those of the Left) launched a crusade on the pages of the press and through other publications against the personal regime. Setting off from the “letter and spirit” of the constitution, the debates concerned the principles, organization and functioning of parliamentary government, the state of Bulgarian parliamentarism and the violations of legality and the measures to be taken. The discussion went beyond the print media and juridical analysis and moved to parliament, forcing the liberal bosses to take a position. Of the five liberal and liberal-democratic parties, three—the People’s Party, the Democratic Party, and the Progressive-Liberal Party—openly declared their opposition to the personal regime and directed their policies toward ensuring “the free elections and the citizens’ conscious participation in them,” “civic education in the spirit of the Constitution” and the “creation of public opinion to eventually become an effective factor, powerful and decisive, as envisaged by the basic law.”²²⁰ To these ends several significant amendments of the electoral law were introduced, culminating in the adoption, in 1912, of a proportional electoral system.

The measures taken seem to have had some effect, judging from the trend of electoral participation in general elections: 32 percent in 1879, 29 percent in 1884, 19 percent in 1893 (during Stambolov’s regime), 49.5 percent in 1899, 50.2 percent in 1908 and 54 percent in 1911.²²¹ The direct administrative or police pressure during campaigning was slowly beginning to give way to more sophisticated methods of manipulation. At the same time the Liberals made little effort to match their political reforms with social ones—an omission that, under a liberalized political

²²⁰ *Programi, programni dokumenti*, 189, 225–229, 233, 372, 375, 403, 412, 416, 430–434.

²²¹ Diana Mishkova, “Modernization and Political Elites in the Balkans before the First World War,” *East European Politics and Societies* 9, no. 1 (1995), 82.

regime, would cost them more in terms of electoral support than they had ever gained by upholding the democratization of the system.

* * *

To sum up, since the 1870s, liberalism in the three countries in question was losing ground to illiberal nationalism. The previous optimistic ideology seeking to strike a balance between individual and collective freedom, tradition and modernity, past and present, identity and change—in brief, the ideology of liberal nationalism—was receding under the combined pressure of practical politics and new ideological ‘offers.’ In most cases a sharp distinction can be drawn between ‘apostles of liberal nationalism’ and successful liberal politicians, which attests primarily to the uneasy synthesis of ideological commitments and ‘real politics.’

Perhaps nowhere was the shift of balance more obvious than in the inverted relationship between state and society, whereby the state assumed the role of the main—in many key spheres, the sole—engine of development. The self-regulating mechanisms of civil society were replaced by state-imposed ideological and institutional structures stemming from the Western liberal model (hence, for example, the wholesale import of the Belgian constitution in the Balkans in the nineteenth century), and the newly established nation-states were turned into an aggressive instrument of social and economic change—of an etatist modernization. In this sense, liberals across the region were above all political engineers and ‘professionals of modernization.’ Etatist, protectionist and emphatically nationalist reformulations of political and economic agendas became the hallmark of ‘liberalism in power.’ Thus, paradoxically enough, in all those countries liberalism’s political domination coincided with its ideological decline.²²²

Two concurrent tendencies led to this development. On the one hand, the positive legacy of liberal nationalism, both ideological and institutional, was largely appropriated by competing ideologies to the left and the right, which had different visions about the direction, rationale and social targets of modernization. This process, on the other hand, ran parallel to a transformation in the ideology of nationalism, away from its humanist-universalist tenets toward increasingly anti-liberal, ethnicist and ‘biological’ positions. The previous symbiosis between liberalism and nationalism became increasingly troubled and, ultimately, impractical.

²²² Balázs Trencsényi et al., *Negotiating Modernity*.

The political systems that the liberals created operated everywhere in the Balkans in practice, and in Romania by law, as restrictive systems—based on the notion of ‘political capacity’ rather than the ‘right’ of political participation and which limited the actual involvement of ‘the People’ in politics.²²³ In Serbia and Bulgaria, where general suffrage was sanctioned by constitutions, those endowed with the ‘capacity’ were a parliamentary oligarchy. This political class, living off the exploitation of the state apparatus rather than hinging on a representative system of competing economic and social interests, was a common phenomenon in all three countries. In Romania it was constitutionally buttressed by a *censitaire* electoral system that added to the stability of the oligarchic regime.

The conventional political explanation for the decline of liberalism in Europe after the 1870s is based on the decline of ‘the politics of notables’ and its replacement by ‘mass politics,’ that is, “the replacement of a politics that relied on relatively small numbers of local notables, landowners, businessmen, clergy, teachers, and so on, by a politics in which party organizations mobilized large numbers of voters.”²²⁴ Balkan liberalisms countered this challenge with varying success. Bulgarian and Romanian liberals proved better at adapting to mass politics than did Serbian liberals, and they managed to maintain themselves longer as political actors. Serbian liberalism did not survive the advent of mass politics, which came about in the 1880s under the banner of the Popular-Radical Party. Even if for somewhat different reasons, this was also true of Miletić’s National-Liberal Party in Dualist Hungary. Since the mid-1890s, following the fall of Stambolov, the Bulgarian liberals had tried hard, and largely succeeded, to adapt themselves to the free and unrestricted practice of universal suffrage by adopting modern political techniques. This did not ‘save’ them in the new situation following the Great War, but the reason for that was not organizational. At the cost of fulfilling their revolutionary agenda of agrarian reform and political participation, the Romanian liberals re-emerged as a major political force after the War.

The actual reason for the demise of Balkan liberalism lies elsewhere. As in other parts of Europe, liberals in the Balkans tended to take little heed of, if not economic issues per se, then at least the social impact of their economic and fiscal, largely protectionist reforms. “Liberal parties

²²³ On the concept and discourse of political capacity as “the foundation of liberal political culture,” see Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*.

²²⁴ Kahan, *Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, 174.

continued to emphasize the constitutional questions dear to them but no longer of much interest to the electorate, or made nationalist appeals that were largely beside the point in these elections.”²²⁵ In the Serbian case that was most obvious—neither the nominal Liberals nor the Progressives proved to be at the height of the expectations of their largely peasant electorate. The fruits of their nationalism, on the other hand, were reaped by their populist opponents, the Popular-Radicals, whose mobilizational thrust managed, in the words of Slobodan Jovanović, to “reconcile the peasant mass with the state idea.” Bulgarian liberals were embroiled in debates about the legal nature of the constitution and the royal prerogatives. Their civic and irredentist nationalism had no serious challenge but its own failures—to win over the peasant vote and, most crucially, complete the national unification and thus redeem the protracted war effort between 1912 and 1918. No major mass party emerged to challenge the two-party system in Romania when the Great War broke out, but the Liberals’ social conservatism still had a price to pay: in 1907 the ‘peasant question’ pressed hard upon the Romanian political class, while the radicalization of the masses during the war made that episode look like an omen. It was the National Liberal Party’s decision to confront the looming social risks that made possible its transition to the era of mass politics, though at the cost of moving further away from its liberal foundations.

CONCLUSIONS: LIBERALISM’S LEGACY

Nineteenth-century Balkan liberalism, as we see, went through three distinct phases. The early one, which preceded the revolutions of 1848, centered on projects for constitutional and legal reforms under the sway of the late-Enlightenment political theories. Liberal nationalism at that time typically combined revivalist romantic themes and universalist ideas about natural rights and individual freedom. The peak of that period was the 1848 revolutions. After their defeat and until the late 1860s, liberalism underwent reorientation in that the defense of collective rights came to overshadow the universal principle of individual rights. While sustaining its romantic veneer, liberalism became increasingly political, subordinating the programs for social reforms to the ideal of the unified nation-state. In the framework of the newly established semi- or fully independent

²²⁵ Ibid., 176. The author bases this observation on German liberalism in the 1890s.

states during the late 1860s and the 1870s, the liberals came to dominate the political establishment in all three countries. This 'liberalism in power,' whose duration differed from country to country, signaled a turn towards more conservative stances, especially in the social field, and preoccupation with state sovereignty, modernization and irredentism.

Within this chronological frame the relative weight of the different phases in our three countries was not the same. In Serbia one can barely speak of a full-fledged national-liberal program before or during the 1848 revolutions, while the peak of Bulgarian revivalist national liberalism came only after the Crimean War (1853–1856). On the other hand, the actual content of liberal nationalisms in each phase depended as much on the local sociocultural context and political dynamics as it did on mutual connections and cross-national transfers. Those coming from Germany, France and Britain outweighed as a rule the intraregional ones, and the exchanges within the international solidarity networks, albeit never unilateral, were rarely symmetrical.

Revolutionary liberal internationalism was at its highest in the period between the Congress of Vienna (1815) and 1848, but certain "pockets of transnational resistance to authoritarian states" continued to attract followers from the Balkans for about two more decades afterwards.²²⁶ Typically these were exiled liberal revolutionaries like the Rumanian 1848 refugees to Paris in the 1850s or the Serbian liberal émigrés in the 1860s, who acted as two-way transmitters of ideas and experiences, 'cosmopolitan' and 'patriotic'. This same period was also the heyday of intra-Balkan liberal interaction based on either solidarity, as between the Serbs and the Bulgarians, or confrontation, as between the Habsburg Romanians and Serbs and the Hungarians. These European and regional networks provided a space for exchange whose multi-lateral effects remain under-researched. The above survey did not aim to redress thoroughly this deficiency, but it sought to move in this direction by casting light on ideational transfer and adaptation and on intraregional interaction as two important dimensions in the process of exchange. A conclusion that imposes itself thereby is that the sweeping politicization of Balkan societies, which the

²²⁶ See Jianu, *A Circle of Friends*, *passim*. Some authors contest, however, the existence of an 'internationalism of exile'. Sylvie Aprile (*Le siècle des exilés. Bannis et proscrits, de 1789 à la Commune* [Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2010]), for example, has emphasised the distrust between the East-Central European and French diasporas, which undermined revolutionary internationalism in mid-nineteenth-century Europe.

liberals had brought along, went hand in hand with an unprecedented internationalization of politics. Personal connections, network collaboration or 'formative' confrontations, as we saw, partook in the process of internationalizing politics. But so did the new means of communication, printed media in particular, which expanded enormously the space of information, regional and European, and helped internationalize events, movements and ideologies.

In view of the role that Balkan liberals themselves assigned to liberal ideas and institutions as possessing the capacity to transform politics and society, it is reasonable to ask in the end: how did the effects and consequences of Balkan liberalism measure up with its stated goals? When venturing an answer to this question, we should keep in mind that the modernizing project of the Balkan liberals involved at least three daunting tasks: the building of the state (at a time when its functions were growing fast in all of Europe), the building of the nation, and the democratization of the political regime. The very simultaneity and entwinement of these processes posed as formidable a challenge for the political class of the time as it poses today for the researcher trying to evaluate the effectiveness of each, although in most cases their separation proves impossible.

The lasting achievement of the liberals' intervention in the Balkan political scene was the creation of a modern political system, with its concomitant pluralism, representation rules and freedoms, and the recognition of the nation-state as the only legitimate form of political power. Whereas before their ascendance political legitimacy rested fully upon traditional grounds related to custom, monarchic rule, hereditary rights or education, afterwards politicians deemed it necessary to assert their right to power in terms of how truly they represented the people. The political class as a whole came to share one legitimating groundwork—the nation—and one ideal—national sovereignty. This revolution in the conception of legitimate power is an integral part of modern government. Henceforth the battle was to be waged over the specific nature of the nation, of its sovereignty and the national interests, but not over the framework itself.

Despite its supposed weakness in the Balkan environment, liberalism provided the language—the vocabulary and the semantics—of this new political legitimacy. This explains why deviations from or the abrogation of parliamentary procedures were invariably seen as institutional aberrations in the local political tradition. This consensus on political rectitude resurfaced each time royal powers were exceeded, when the military intervened in politics or an authoritarian regime was instituted (not infrequent occurrences in the period between the two world wars), and

it constituted a serious obstacle to the institutionalization and legitimacy of long-term dictatorial rule. As a rule a coup's perpetrators themselves justified their actions as a temporary measure intended to safeguard the liberal foundations of the political order against anti-liberal assaults, not as an attempt to eliminate representative democracy. In other words, the fact that parliamentary institutions in the Balkans (and the periphery generally) did not function as they did in some countries in the West does not mean that their role was merely decorative.²²⁷ Seen in this broader historical perspective, liberal theory and practice, despite their supposed incompatibility with the Balkan milieu, deeply impacted the Balkan normative horizon.

This wide range of consensus underscores, at the same time, the diffuse impact of the liberal theoretical and institutional legacy on currents to both the left and the right of the political spectrum. Socialist, populist and traditionalist factions appropriated in time the basic norms of civic liberalism and assimilated, in their own way, the liberal program of reforms, though they were more mindful of its social implications and more responsive to the pressures of mass society. While the result was to blur liberalism's distinctive political-ideological identity and set the stage for its long-term decline as an independent political force, its legacy and impact as a diffuse ideology were far more significant than can be inferred from the twentieth-century party-political landscape.

Predictably liberalism, particularly its national-liberal variant, replicated neither the premises nor the effect of the 'canonical' models. Balkan liberals accomplished their revolution in the understanding of legitimate rule by instrumentalizing tradition and redefining the meaning of liberty, whereby the individualistic aspects and anthropological optimism of classical liberalism were overshadowed by the ideals of collective empowerment and national harmony. On the positive side, this redefinition led to the relatively early imposition, Romania excepted, of (at least the ideals of) liberal democracy and a democratic citizenry. Therefore it seems unconvincing to maintain, as some Western students of the Balkans do, that if the liberals were eager to implement against all odds a modern state structure, it was primarily with the intention of earning admission for their countries in the 'civilized world' and the 'European family of states.' This aspiration was certainly there, but it does not explain why demands for liberal-democratic institutions and norms of government came to prevail

²²⁷ Mishkova, "Modernization and Political Elites," 76–77.

at a time when the political systems in Europe were for the most part conservative-liberal, not democratic. An explanation that seems to ensue from the foregoing analysis is that in early modernizing societies such as the Balkan, it was precisely these institutions which were entrusted with the key mission of cultivating patriots and loyal citizens—that is, of forging nations out of disparate and weakly integrated populations. In this the egalitarian translation of democracy, the monolithic popular designation of the community endowed with the right to self-rule, and the notion of liberty as ‘freedom of the nation’ fed on and bolstered each other. In time, and especially after they rose to power, the Liberals found it increasingly difficult to consume the fruits of this concoction and to harmonize their nationalist commitments with their liberal ideals.

On an institutional level, electoral competition, however intermittent or distorted by fraud and coercion, was a strong force contributing to the relatively early demise of restrictive structures of domination. The restrictive form of parliamentary government, in all of the countries concerned, began to weaken toward the end of the nineteenth century, followed by its breakdown and the opening up of the representative system to new political elites during the first two decades of the twentieth century.²²⁸ This explains the emergence and rise to power of the Radical Party in Serbia, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union in Bulgaria, and the National Peasant Party in Romania. The advent of mass politics and the challenge of integrating numerous newly acquired populations after the Great War boosted liberalism’s collectivist and etatist drive, underway since the late nineteenth century, toward growing interventionism, social integration (“social harmony”), and ethnocentrism. Interwar ‘neo-liberalism’ came to epitomize this mutant form, which pursued modernity through etatism, economic (occasionally autarkic) protectionism and centralist nationalism while relegating individual freedom and democracy—the pillars of the one-time national-liberal project—to the status of abstract and essentially unworkable obsolete ideals. For all intents and purposes, the ideology, if not the legacy, of nineteenth-century national liberalism came to an end.

²²⁸ Mouzelis, *Politics in the Semi-Periphery*, 3–48.

EARLY SOCIALISM IN THE BALKANS: IDEAS AND PRACTICES IN SERBIA, ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

Blagovest Njagulov

INTRODUCTION

Based on the principles of social solidarity and social justice, socialism arose as a challenge to the rules of liberal capitalism and a response to the social costs of modernization. Originating in Western Europe, it spread across the world and became an influential ideology and contributed to the broadening of democracy in the modern era. When it emerged as a term in the 1830s and 1840s, "socialism" signified a variety of ideological doctrines and political movements that denounced extreme bourgeois individualism and called for reforms to create a new society based on equality and fraternity. The term was politicized in the wake of the revolutions of 1848, when socialism united democratic demands with the idea of social reforms. Unlike utopian socialism, which focuses on the economic and social reorganization of society and is a continuation of the ideas of the Enlightenment, political socialism links social revolution with the conquest of political power and seeks to transform abstract liberties into concrete workers' rights.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, socialists identified three priorities. First was to abolish or reform the system of industrial production based on free competition and the concentration of wealth. This implied abolishing private ownership of the means of production and mobilizing all workers against the dominant class of the bourgeoisie. Another priority was to change or abolish the political, religious and cultural ideologies and institutions that maintained the status quo. Although not all socialists sought to eliminate the "bourgeois order," they criticized liberal individualism, the model of the modern nation and state institutions, as well as the principles of representative government and parliamentary rule. A third priority was to build a new society based on the values of equality and solidarity, thus providing happiness for all, redistribution of wealth, and social rights for and protection of the poor.

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the "scientific socialism" of Marx and Engels started to dominate socialist

thought. The coherence of Marxism—combining a theoretical explanation of capitalist exploitation with revolutionary practice, its violent criticism of capitalism, and the defeat of rival tendencies in the First International (1864–1876) and the Second International (1889–1916)—helped turn it into the main theoretical reference for most socialist leaders. At the same time the application of Marx's doctrine to various social, economic and political settings before World War I yielded various ideologies, all of which claimed legitimate descent from the classical texts.

As an ideology and movement, socialism failed to achieve the desired unity at either the international or national level. The disputes and divisions among the different currents and activists can largely be explained by the national specificities and different approaches, particularly with regard to revolutionary strategy. The main points of contention concerned the stance toward the bourgeois parties and the state (revolution or reform), the organizing principle of the struggle against capitalism (trade unions or political parties), and the correlation between internationalism and patriotism (nationalism) within the movement.¹

In order to understand early Balkan socialism, we should first look at the nation-states and the societies in which it tried to take root. The birth and early history of the modern states of the Serbs,² the Romanians³ and the Bulgarians⁴ in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries took shape within the context of the “Eastern Question,” encapsulating the imminent disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the issue of its successors and the intervention of the great powers in the process.

In the course of their evolution, the new states took several forms: autonomous principalities (Serbia after 1830; the United Principalities

¹ Olivier Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice*, trans. by Vasile Savin (Iași: Polirom, 2008), 468–540, originally published as *Histoire des idées politiques* (Armand Colin, 2004); Geoff Elley, *Forging Democracy: The History of the Left in Europe, 1850–2000* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 17–138.

² Woodford D. McClellan, *Svetozar Marković and the Origins of Balkan Socialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964), 21–28; Mira Bogdanović, “Serbia,” in eds. Marcel van der Linden and Jürgen Rojahn *The Formation of Labour Movements, 1870–1914: An International Perspective, Contributions to the History of Labour and Society*, vol. 2, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990), 423–425.

³ Keith Hitchins, “Romania,” in *The Formation of Labour Movements*, eds. van der Linden and Rojahn, 372–373; Keith Hitchins, *România, 1866–1947* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996); *Istoria Românilor*, vol. 7, book 2, *De la Independență la Marea Unire (1878–1918)*, ed. Gheorghe Platon, (Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică, 2003).

⁴ Zhivka Damianova, “Bulgaria,” in *The Formation of Labour Movements*, vol. 2, eds. van der Linden and Rojahn, 393–401; *Istoriya na Bălgariya*, vol. 7, 1878–1903 (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1991); vol. 8, 1903–1918 (Sofia: GALIKO, 1999); John Lampe, *The Bulgarian Economy in the Twentieth Century* (London: Croom Helm, 1986).

of Wallachia and Moldavia after 1859; Bulgaria after 1878), independent principalities (Serbia and Romania after 1878), and kingdoms (Serbia from 1882 to 1918; Romania after 1881, Bulgaria after 1908). The political regimes evolved by starting from "absolute" monarchy (Serbia until 1869), constitutional monarchy (Serbia after 1869 and Romania after 1866), and finally, parliamentary monarchy (Serbia after 1888, though in reality only after 1903; and Bulgaria after 1879).

Many observers saw these states and the political practices at the time as suffering from similar defects and abuses: constitutional crises, coups d'état, authoritarian interventions by monarchs, clientelism, electoral frauds, excessive bureaucracy and unstable governments. The strong influence of the great powers in the region limited the independent actions of the Balkan governments, whose weakness forced them to seek allies to implement their programs for national unity. Balkan nationalisms raised mutually incompatible and overlapping territorial demands, which were soon to shatter the temporary alliances against a common enemy.

By World War I, the new Balkan states had undergone important demographic, social and economic changes. Between 1880 and 1910, their population grew considerably: from 1.7 to 2.9 million in Serbia, from 4.6 to 7 million in Romania, and from 2.8 to 4.3 million in Bulgaria. In spite of some increase in the urban population, in the early twentieth century the vast majority of the population remained rural: 87.3 percent in Serbia (1905), 81.6 percent in Romania (1913) and 80.9 percent in Bulgaria (1910). Despite the emergence of capitalist relations, agriculture remained in rather primitive and traditional forms. All three countries had very small industrial sectors. Thus, on the eve of World War I, Romanian industry (including crafts) accounted for 17 percent of the national income; the respective share of Bulgarian industry was 14 percent.

As industry and transportation grew in the early twentieth century, the number of workers increased. The number of factory workers in Serbia rose from 2,365 in 1900 to 16,095 in 1910. In Romania the number of hired workers in shops and factories increased from 28,000 in 1860 to 107,000 in 1901–1902 and to 212,000 in 1910. In Bulgaria in 1911 the workers in state-protected (meaning bigger) industries was 15,886 (and around 20,000 in all industries).⁵

The wage earners in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria represented a heterogeneous social group without professional traditions. Most of them came from the village. The industrial, artisanal and transport workers lived

⁵ Damianova, "Bulgaria," 400.

mainly in the bigger towns, in poor working and living conditions: simple mechanical tools and poor hygiene at the workplace, low wages and long working hours, and insufficient and cramped workers' lodgings.

The new political classes in the relatively egalitarian societies of Serbia and Bulgaria sought support for their power position through populist policies aiming to attract the peasant majorities by guaranteeing small-scale property and universal manhood suffrage. The traditional elites of the polarized Romanian society postponed such measures at the cost of significant social imbalance.⁶ The tensions caused by the disruptive effects of the coming of modernity divided elite opinions regarding incipient capitalism and its consequences for the Balkan societies. These were challenges that the ideologues, leaders and activists of the emerging socialist movements in the three Balkan states also had to grapple with.

This essay presents an overview of the ideas and practices of early socialism in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria in a comparative perspective. It traces and analyzes the ideas of the most prominent socialist thinkers in the three countries, the revolutionary and reformist currents in the respective socialist movements, and the relationship between trade unions and socialist parties, as well as the connection between internationalism and patriotism in the socialists' views on the "national question." Special attention is paid to how socialist ideas were adapted to the conditions of the agrarian and largely traditional Balkan societies in the attempt to catch up with the West.

1. BALKAN SOCIALIST THINKERS

Russian populism (*narodnichestvo*) was the initial and most influential source and paradigm for early socialism in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. The *narodniks* sought to adapt the socialist doctrine to the conditions of agrarian Russia through a kind of utopian socialism combined with a project for reform. They developed a model for non-capitalist development based on the self-government of peasant communities associated in confederations.⁷

⁶ Diana Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata. Modernost—legitimnost v Sărbija i Rumăniya prez 19 vek* (Sofia: Paradigma, 2001), 221–230.

⁷ The ideas and practices of the Russian populist social movement in the 1860s and 1870s drew on the works of Alexander Herzen and Nikolay Chernyshevsky, whose ideas were refined by N.K. Mikhailovsky. In a "Going to the people" campaign in 1874, the *narodnik* intelligentsia attempted to stir the peasantry to revolt, but found almost no support. The Russian secret police responded to this attempt with repression. After the brutal

In Serbia, Russian populism developed into a powerful political movement and was institutionalized as a political party (the Popular Radical Party, created in 1881); in Bulgaria and Romania it was only a hotbed for Marxism and social democracy. In Bulgaria and Serbia, the closeness of the Slavic languages facilitated the influence of Russian socialism. In Romance-language-speaking Romania, a shared border with Russia was the decisive precondition. Connections to Western socialism existed, but in the early stage of the Balkan socialist movements they remained weak.

Populism was slowly replaced by Marxism in all three countries in the 1880s and especially the 1890s. Both Eastern and Western socialist sources and ideas coexisted in this long period of transition. In the case of Bulgaria, Western socialist literature was mediated through the Russian Marxist theoretician and revolutionary Georgi Plekhanov and the "Liberation of Labor" group based in Switzerland.⁸ The transition from populism to Marxism in Romania was the result of the simultaneous influence of Plekhanov and that of the French Workers' Party, yet Romanian Social Democrats would face the challenge of the agrarian populism or *poporanism* (from *popor*, meaning "people") of Constantin Stere. In Serbia Marxism infiltrated predominantly through German-speaking channels from neighboring Austria-Hungary and Germany. The change of the socialist paradigm in favor of Marxism culminated in the creation of Balkan social democratic parties as agents of specific class interests (in 1891 in Bulgaria, 1893 in Romania and 1903 in Serbia).

The Russian influence resulted from the exodus of Russian revolutionaries to the Balkan countries, as well as from students from these countries studying in Russia or Switzerland, where there were influential Russian student and emigrant colonies.

The flight of *narodniks*, especially from Russian Bessarabia to Romania after the unsuccessful populist "Going to the people" movement, created

suppression of the *narodniks'* revolt in 1877, the first Russian revolutionary party was created.

⁸ Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918) was the founder of the social democratic movement in Russia. Initially involved in the populist movement, he became a convinced Marxist, establishing the first Russian-language Marxist political organization, the "Liberation of Labor" group ("*Osvobozhdenie Truda*"), in Switzerland in 1883. Plekhanov confronted the *narodniks* and argued that the struggle for a socialist future primarily required the development of capitalism in agrarian Russia, and that the Marxists should start with everyday struggles rather than larger revolutionary goals. After the split of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party into Bolshevik and Menshevik organizations in 1903, he believed that the Bolsheviks, headed by Lenin, acted contrary to the objective laws of history.

almost the entire first generation of socialist intellectuals in this country (Nicolae P. Zubcu-Codreanu, Nikolaj K. Sudzilovskij-Russel, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and others). The Russian Populist emigrants to Bulgaria (Vladimir K. Debogori-Mokrievich, Boris Mintses and others) did not play such an influential role in the local socialist movement as in Romania. However, several of their critiques of the Bulgarian Marxists resurfaced in the theoretical dissent of the reformist so-called “Broad” Socialists.

Russian universities attracted many Bulgarians and Serbs. The connection with Russia was stimulated by national propaganda and sponsored by the Russian government and the Slav committees. The founder of the Serbian socialist movement, Svetozar Marković, and the leader of Bulgarian socialism, Dimităr Blagoev, both studied in St. Petersburg. Furthermore, the Russian student communities in Switzerland disseminated populist, anarchist or Marxist ideas among the Balkan students who studied there. The most distinguished figures of the Serbian radical movement (such as S. Marković, Pera Todorović and Nikola Pašić) had close contacts with the Russian community in Zurich. The early active populists in Romania maintained connections with the theorist of collective anarchism Mikhail Bakunin, who was also in Zurich at the time. Many Bulgarian socialists (such as Nikola Gabrovski, Krăstyo (Christian) Rakovski, Slavi Balabanov, Stoyan Nokov and Georgi Bakalov) received their university education in Switzerland. The Bulgarian students in Geneva in the late 1880s and the early 1890s were strongly influenced by the Russian Marxist group around Akselrod, Zasulich, and Plekhanov.

Augusta Dimou has recently uncovered the differences in the Bulgarian and Serbian experience of how populism transformed into Marxism in the 1880s and 1890s. While in Serbia the change of paradigm was accomplished by different generations, in Bulgaria it was carried out by the same generation, which was schooled in populism but which converted to full-fledged Marxism. In Serbia the institutionalization of populism in the Radical Party in 1881 and the Radicals’ incorporation of Marxist argumentation prevented the change of paradigm until the creation of the Social Democratic Party in 1903. In Bulgaria the legacy of “non-institutionalized” populism increased the socialists’ capacity for popular propaganda, particularly in the countryside.⁹

⁹ Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity: Contextualising Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 19–24.

The motivation of the early socialist intellectuals in the Balkans was partially grounded in the Russian ideal of a socially engaged intelligentsia and even more so in the local conditions. The adoption of socialist ideas was a reaction to the “disasters” of modernization in the form of liberal capitalism and an expression of the search for alternative ways of development for the backward Balkan societies. The intellectuals’ radicalization and their turn to leftist ideologies in Serbia and Bulgaria was also fueled by the frustration over dysfunctional political systems and violations of political liberties. In the case of Romania, where the political system was stable, the early socialists were motivated mostly by social and economic concerns, more specifically, by the explosive agrarian issue.

Unlike in Serbia and Bulgaria, where the first radical/socialist intellectuals were mostly local people, their counterparts in Romania came predominantly from abroad (Russian Bessarabia and Russia proper) or from the country’s periphery. Neither the first party leader, Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (of Jewish/Russian descent), nor his successor, Krăstyo (Christian) Rakovski (of Bulgarian descent, from Dobrudja), were ethnic Romanians. Serbian and Bulgarian socialist intellectuals were typically of modest social background and worked as teachers.¹⁰

In what follows, early socialism in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria will be compared by outlining the ideas of its most important ideologues in the three countries.

Svetozar Marković: Forward towards “Zadruga Socialism”

The pre-Marxist period of the socialist movement in Serbia lasted from the 1870s until the mid-1890s and was associated mostly with Svetozar Marković (1846–1875).¹¹ His brief but multifaceted life and work as a journalist and literary critic, national revolutionary and political strategist, as

¹⁰ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 48–54.

¹¹ See *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe, 1770–1945. Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 3, Part 1 *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States*, eds. Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny and Vangelis Kechriotis, (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2010), 399–404; Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 161–192; Latinka Perović, *Srpski socijalisti 19. veka. Prilog istoriji socijalističke misli* (Belgrade: Službeni list SRJ, 1995); *Svetozar Marković danas*, eds. Andrija Stojković and Vera Pilić-Rakić (Belgrade: Epoha, 1992); Dragiša Lapčević, *Istorija socijalizma u Srbiji* (Belgrade: Slovo Ljubve, 1979; first published in 1922), 43–88; Đorđe Mitrović, Savo Andrić, *Svetozar Marković i njegova doba* (Belgrade: Rad, 1978); Woodford D. McClellan, *Svetozar Marković and the Origins of Balkan Socialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1964); Svetozar Marković, *Sabrani spisi*, vols. 1–4 (Belgrade: Kultura, 1960–1965); Slobodan Jovanović, *Svetozar Marković* (Belgrade: Izdavačka knjižarnica Gece Kona, 1920; 2nd, expanded edition); Jovan

well as founder of political movements and cooperatives, was based on the modern ideas of materialism, realism, republicanism, federalism and socialism. His overriding conviction was that for Serbia, capitalism was not a necessary prerequisite of socialism, because the ancient forms of communal life and property furnished a sound basis for the new socialist society.

Born in a clerk's family in Zaječar, in the underdeveloped eastern part of Serbia, Svetozar Marković studied in the first secondary school in Belgrade. At the age of 20, he went to Russia to study engineering in St. Petersburg on a government scholarship. Three years later he moved to Zurich, Switzerland, where he did not continue his education but became engaged in political activity.¹² In July 1870 he returned to Serbia, where he became intensely involved in spreading socialist ideas.

Marković's ideology was rooted mostly in Russian *narodnik* socialism, as well as in the European socialist movement. In Russia he was strongly influenced by the works of the leaders of the Russian revolutionary democratic movement of the 1860s: Nikolay G. Chernyshevsky,¹³ Alexander Herzen¹⁴ and others. In Switzerland he studied the works of Marx and Engels, the French socialist reformist Louis Blanc,¹⁵ the German socialist and political activist Ferdinand Lassalle¹⁶ and the French theorist of anarchism Pierre Proudhon.¹⁷ While in St. Petersburg, he was politically

Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković: Njegov život, rad i ideje* (Belgrade: Nova štamparija Davidovića, 1910); Svetozar Marković, *Celokupna dela*, vols. 1–8 (Belgrade: Lj. Joksimović, 1892–1912).

¹² His scholarship was suspended after the appearance of his article "Our Delusions" (*Naše obmane*) in 1869 in the newspaper *Zastava*, published in Novi Sad, where he sharply criticized the Serbian constitution of that year and the political regime in the country.

¹³ Nikolay G. Chernyshevsky (1828–1889) advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the autocracy and the creation of a socialist society based on the old peasant commune. His teachings owed a great deal to the Western visionaries, especially the French utopian socialist Charles Fourier (1772–1837). His novel *What Is to Be Done?* was an inspiration to many later Russian revolutionaries.

¹⁴ Alexander Herzen (1812–1870) was a Russian writer and thinker known as "the father of Russian socialism." His works urged the emancipation of the Russian serfs in 1861.

¹⁵ Louis Blanc (1811–1881) favored reforms in order to avoid the pressure of competition in society and called for the creation of cooperatives in order to guarantee employment for the urban poor.

¹⁶ Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–1864) rejected Marx's idea that the state was a class-based power structure and saw the state as an independent entity, an instrument of justice essential for the achievement of the socialist program. In 1863 he founded the first German labor party whose only purpose was to win equal, universal and direct suffrage through peaceful and legal means.

¹⁷ Pierre Proudhon (1809–1865) defined anarchism as "order without power," and he was the first self-pronounced "anarchist." He opposed state ownership of capital goods in favor of ownership by workers themselves in associations, and he believed that social

active among the Serbian students and was involved in the struggles of the Russian revolutionaries; in Zurich he joined the Russian section of the First International and adopted the basic principles of Marxism. Just as Chernyshevsky later became a major influence on the leading Russian Marxists, Marković exerted a comparable influence on the later generation of Serbian Marxists who led the Serbian Social Democratic Party.

Marković's political activity in Belgrade was short-lived yet very intense. He sharply criticized the existing social, economic and political system; defended the Paris Commune; established the first socialist groups and producer and consumer cooperatives; and tried to transform the "United Serbian Youth" (*Ujedinjena omladina srpska*, or *Omladina* for short)¹⁸ into a division of the First International. In 1871 he began publishing *The Worker* (*Radnik*), the first socialist newspaper in Serbia, and in June of the same year, his associates published *The Communist Manifesto* in Serbian. In 1873 he published other newspapers disseminating his brand of socialist ideas, which were shared by certain opposition deputies and propagated in the Serbian Parliament. After prosecution by the authorities, in 1874 Marković was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment. As a result, he became ill with tuberculosis and, upon his release from prison, died in Trieste at the age of only 28.

"Russian socialism," the Russian counterpart of Western socialist theories, remained Marković's dominant influence.¹⁹ He saw many similarities between peasant Russia and peasant Serbia, and so he was sympathetic to the agrarian socialism of Chernyshevsky. Marković agreed with Chernyshevsky that a country's backwardness could be a blessing because an incipient capitalism could still be arrested and eradicated—in Russia's case by means of the peasant commune. The capitalist stage of economic development could be avoided under the leadership of an enlightened intelligentsia, and thus the backward country could move directly to socialism: "Our task is not to destroy the capitalist economy, which, in fact, does not exist [in Serbia], but to transform the petty patriarchal property into

revolution could be achieved in a peaceful manner. The dispute between Proudhon and Marx became one of the sources of the split between the anarchist and Marxist wings in the First International.

¹⁸ The *Omladina* was a Serbian political movement for liberation and unification established by the Serbs in the Habsburg Empire in 1866.

¹⁹ For further details about *narodničestvo* as the theoretical framework of Serbian socialism, see Perović, *Srpski socialisti 19. veka*. 7–45.

a collective property, and thus skip an entire historical era of economic development, the era of capitalist economy.”²⁰

Marković’s views were also influenced by Marxism, which for two years after his return to Serbia even seemed to outweigh his Russian socialism. He accepted Marx’s analysis of capitalism, sided with Marx in his struggle with Bakunin, and analyzed the Paris Commune from a largely Marxist point of view. Yet Marković did not accept Marx’s rigid determinism and, as early as 1871, expressed doubts as to whether all societies should follow the path of the industrialized West. It was this skepticism that ultimately made him turn back to the agrarian socialism of Chernyshevsky and adapt it to the Serbian context.

Marković’s ideological position is inscribed in the political debates surrounding the adoption of the Serbian Constitution of 1869, which provided for the replacement of patriarchal institutions in the country with modern ones. These debates gave expression to two political orientations—*narodnik* socialism and liberalism. Marković and his supporters advocated the concept of a “people’s democracy” (or “self-governing democracy”) grounded in the sovereignty of the people and Serbian patriarchal institutions and values, and aimed at skipping capitalism and moving straight into socialism. They faced off against the supporters of the other concept—“liberal democracy”—who based their visions for democratic development and a modern state on the liberal premises of civil rights. The two political visions for the development of the Serbian society culminated in the splitting of the “United Serbian Youth” (*Omladina*) between supporters of socialism and of liberalism, associated with Svetozar Marković and Vladimir Jovanović (1833–1922), respectively. Marković criticized the liberals for their political deal with the Regency after the assassination of Prince Mihajlo Obrenović in 1868, and for preparing the 1869 Constitution, which strengthened the power of the government over Parliament. He believed that a real political democracy should lead to social change, including the collectivization of labor and land.²¹

In his book *The Real Trends in Science and Life* (*Realni pravci u nauci i životu*), which appeared in 1871–1872, Marković emphasized the role of science and of an educated minority in the historical process.²² As a literary critic, he called for a critical approach to social processes and for realism

²⁰ Marković, *Sabrani spisi*, vol. 4, 145.

²¹ *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 3/1, 401.

²² Marković, *Celokupna dela*, vol. 5, *Realni pravci u nauci i životu* (first published in *Letopis Matice srpske*, 1871–1872).

in Serbian literature at a time when it was dominated by Romanticism. In his major work *Serbia in the East* (*Srbija na istoku*), published in 1872, Marković analyzed the social, economic and political problems of the country from a socialist perspective.²³

Marković directed his social criticism towards the liberal state, which he viewed primarily as a bureaucratic state. He stated that “the bureaucracy is the exploiting class” in Serbia, creating “a process whereby the entire people becomes a single proletarian class.” The first Serbian socialist considered state bureaucracy to be the greatest social evil in Serbian society. The criticism of the bureaucratic system in agrarian Serbia matched the criticism of “capital” in the industrialized Western societies. Marković demanded the abolition of bureaucracy and the bureaucratic state and proposed that their functions be taken over by a free union of self-governing units. The latter was to be managed by the local population according to entirely elective and voluntary principles. The “ultimate social state,” according to Marković, was a state in which “there is no government and governed, power and subordination, educated and ignorant, good and bad.”²⁴

Marković proposed a model of direct democracy based on peasant patriarchal institutions, in contrast with the existing society governed by state bureaucracy. As essential units of this new society, he proposed the traditional Serbian *zadruga*, or extended family of several generations who worked together on their common property, as well as the *opština*, or local commune made up of representatives of the local *zadrugas*, which would elect a central national council. Inspired by the Russian *mir* (a village commune with collective rights on land property), Marković came up with an idealized vision of the economic, social and spiritual values of collective life in the *zadruga*. According to this concept the patriarchal forms in Serbia embodied the principles of a socialist organization, labor association and collective ownership; hence these forms were suited to guarantee a safe transition to socialism. Moreover, the *zadruga* was appreciated as the institution that had preserved Serbdom during Ottoman rule. If “*zadruga* socialism” was the cornerstone of the early radical doctrine associated with Marković, with the evolution of the movement it became more of a symbol, until it was abandoned altogether.²⁵

²³ Marković, *Celokupna dela*, vol. 6, *Srbija na istoku* (first published in 1872).

²⁴ Cited in Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 164.

²⁵ According to older interpretations, the *zadruga* had existed in Slavic and Balkan areas since the Middle Ages. New historical studies have contested these assertions and

According to Marković, economic progress in a predominantly agrarian Serbia could be achieved through the cooperation of small craftsmen and peasants as a way to create a “people’s industry,” while avoiding the capitalist path of development and moving directly to socialism.

Marković’s ideology held that combining Serbian patriarchal institutions and values with socialist ideology would enable the Serbian people to simultaneously receive the fruits of Western capitalism and keep the “national essence” intact.²⁶ The early Serbian socialist was more of a humanist intellectual than a realist politician. He sought to create a society in which the collectivism of the peasant and the altruism of the enlightened intellectual would replace the egoism and the selfishness of the merchant and the bureaucrat. But his cause did not translate into the peasants’ language. His efforts toward a democratic and decentralized government struck a chord with the traditionalist affinities of the Serbian peasants, but his appeals for collectivizing land had little chance of winning the hearts and minds of the vast majority of small proprietors. As W. McClellan put it, Marković “remains a tragic rather than a heroic figure in Balkan history.”²⁷

*Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea:
Adapting Marxism to Backward Societies*

The most prominent ideologue of early socialism in Romania was Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea (1855–1920),²⁸ who played a decisive role in the

presented the *zadruga* as a response to social and economic developments during the eighteenth century and the orientation to stockbreeding in mostly mountainous parts of the Western Balkans that were not exclusively Slavic (reference is made to Albania and southern Hungary). The *zadruga* was widespread in Serbia and in western Bulgaria but did not exist in Romania and Greece. While Marković explored this topic, probably by analogy to the Russian *mir* and *obština*, the *zadruga* was not as important a topic for the Bulgarian pre-Marxist and Marxist socialists. See Dimou, *Entangled Paths*, 76–78, 149–150; Maria Todorova, *Balkan Family Structures and the European Pattern: Demographic Development in Ottoman Bulgaria* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 133–174.

²⁶ *Discourses of Collective Identity Modernism*, vol. 3/1, 402.

²⁷ McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 262–266.

²⁸ See *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 3/1, 419–425; Michael Shafir, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea: Wrong Time, Wrong Face, Wrong Place,” *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai*, *Studia Europaea* 52, no. 2 (2007), 5–47; Zigu Ornea, *Viața lui Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Bucharest: Compania, 2006); Felix Aderca, *C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Viața și opera*, second edition (Iași: Princeps edit, 2003); Ioan Leicu, *Concepția politică a lui C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea “Babeș-Bolyai,” 1991); Zigu Ornea, *Opera lui Dobrogeanu-Gherea* (Bucharest: Editura Cartea românească, 1983); Michael Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea and Rumanian Marxism,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 55, no. 1 (January 1977), 64–89; Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vols. 1–8

development of the socialist movement in the country until the outbreak of World War I. His works, particularly *Neoiobăgia* (Neo-Serfdom), had a strong impact on the Romanian social democrats. For that reason he has been credited as “the intellectual father of social democracy” in Romania. He has also been recognized as one of the founders of sociology in Romania and as a prolific literary critic.²⁹

Gherea was born in Yekaterinoslav Governorate (now Dnipropetrovsk), then in Russia. As a student at Kharkiv University, he engaged in revolutionary politics, took part in the failed “Going to the people” campaign of the *narodniks* and, after persecution by the Russian secret police (*Okhrana*) in 1875, fled from Russia and settled in Iași. Later he moved to Bucharest, where he helped found the first socialist groups in Romania. During the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, Gherea was arrested by the Russian police in Galați in November 1878, charged with old offenses, and banished to the shores of the White Sea. After he managed to escape in 1879, he returned to Romania. These experiences turned Gherea into a bitter foe of Russia. In 1882 he became the owner of a restaurant at the railway station in Ploiești, which he turned into a meeting point for socialists. Gherea participated in the founding of the Romanian Social Democratic Party in 1893 and authored its political program.

By returning to Romania, Gherea, in the words of Michael Shafir, “apparently chose the wrong place at the wrong time.” In a country still in the process of forging its national identity and lacking a proletariat in the Western sense of the word, socialism that preached the decline of the state had little chance of gaining popularity. In a 1894 letter to Karl Kautsky, Gherea confessed that when he “first arrived in Romania as a Russian refugee, the word ‘socialism’ was not even known” there. The Romanian intellectual elite engaged primarily in the nation-building process and perceived socialism as an “imported exotic plant.”³⁰

Like Marković, Gherea began his public activity among the Russian populists, but unlike him, he shifted all the way from *narodnik* theories to Marxism. This conversion began in the mid-1870s and ended with Gherea’s book *What Do Romanian Socialists Want? An Exposition of Scientific Socialism*

(Bucharest: Editura politică, 1976–1983); Damian Horezeanu, *C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea. Studii social-politice* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1973).

²⁹ His dispute on art with another major cultural figure in Romania, Titu Maiorescu, gained particular prominence. Gherea challenged Maiorescu’s thesis about “art for art’s sake” with his “art with tendency” (*artă cu tendință*).

³⁰ Cited in Shafir, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 11–12.

(*Ce vor socialiștii români? Expunerea socialismului științific*), published in 1885–1886. Familiar with Romanian social and economic conditions and armed with the Marxian tools of analysis, Gherea predicted the development of an industry and a proletariat in Romania similar to those in Western Europe. As he saw it, the main function of the socialist party was to accelerate this process by raising the consciousness of the working masses and democratizing public life. Gherea specified two immediate tasks for the socialists: first, to hasten the spread of scientific socialism in order to prepare people's minds for the coming social transformations, and second, to change the actual situation in the country by modifying the material conditions of existence. To accomplish these tasks, he urged the introduction of general democratic political reforms, such as universal suffrage for all citizens over the age of twenty; full freedom of the press, assembly, and association; free and compulsory primary education; the election of judges by the people; and free justice for all, as well as equality for women. He also proposed to hasten the transition from a feudal “neo-serfdom” economy to modern capitalist forms by transferring the property of the state and the large landowners to peasant communes and by providing credit to both peasants and workers in cooperatives or other associations to carry on their economic activities more profitably. For the first time in Romania, Gherea set forth the thesis of the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary means for the creation of a socialist society.³¹

Throughout his work as a Romanian socialist, Gherea was preoccupied with the question of what socialism, as an ideology and movement characteristic of advanced capitalist countries, could mean in backward and agrarian countries such as Romania. He sought to adapt Marx's theory to Romania's situation, offering an original approach to the specific problems of a non-industrial society from a Marxist viewpoint. Provoked by the debate with agrarian populism (*poporanismul*), which was advocated by Constantin Stere,³² Gherea tried to refute the assertion that social democracy was an “exotic plant” in Romania, placing the country in the wider social context of the “capitalist era.” On this basis he laid out what he called the “law of development for backward societies”: “Backward countries

³¹ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 2 (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1976), 7–126 (*Ce vor socialiștii români?*); Hitchins, *România*, 376–377.

³² *Poporanismul* emerged in the 1890s as the Romanian version of Russian *narodnichestvo*. See Zigu Ornea, *Poporanismul* (Bucharest: Minerva, 1972); Zigu Ornea, *Viața lui C. Stere* (Bucharest: Compania, 2006); Michael Kitch, “Constantin Stere and Romanian Populism,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 53, no. 131 (April 1975), 248–271. See also the chapter on agrarianism in this volume.

have entered into the orbit of the advanced capitalist countries, they have moved in the orbit of these countries, and their whole life, development and social evolution are being determined by the life and movement of the advanced countries and the historical era in which they exist—by the era of bourgeois capitalism.”³³

Gherea formulated this “law” in order to demonstrate the inevitability of capitalist development in backward societies, accepting Marx’s assertion that “the country that is more developed industrially only shows, to the less developed, the image of its own future.”³⁴ The Romanian socialist thinker was convinced that Romania had already become “a country with a kind of capitalist development, a capitalist society, albeit backward [and] with medieval remnants.” This level of development resulted from the advanced countries’ commercial relations with agrarian Romania, and it was marked by the ascendance of commercial or merchant capital.³⁵ However, Marx himself had insisted that commercial capital in the trade between industrial and agrarian economies does not necessarily promote industrial development in the latter.³⁶

As a professed Marxist, Gherea concluded that Romanian development necessarily had to replicate that of Western Europe by passing into industrial capitalism. By contrast, the agrarian populist Constantin Stere argued that since capitalist development required access to world markets, which backward societies were denied by virtue of their high production costs, the industrialization of such societies would prove abortive. This disagreement over the course of economic development underlay the antagonism between Marxists and Agrarian Populists in Romania.³⁷

Although Gherea insisted that backward societies would undergo the same social evolution as the advanced societies, he stressed at the same time that their development would take a different route. Backward countries would need much less time to adopt the new forms than advanced countries evolving at their usual pace would. Furthermore, unlike the bottom-up model of revolutionary change in developed countries, in backward countries a top-down model applied. As Gherea put it:

³³ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Post-scriptum sau cuvinte uitate [1908],” in idem, *Scriere social-police* (Bucharest, 1968), 211–212.

³⁴ Cited in Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 74.

³⁵ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Socialismul în țările înapoiate [1911],” in idem, *Scriere social-politice*, 262–263.

³⁶ Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 75.

³⁷ Ibid., 75–76; Kitch, “Constantin Stere,” 259.

[...] in backward capitalist countries like Romania, a political and social form has been introduced without having corresponding material conditions; instead the base develops afterwards. Our country is, therefore, the opposite of those Marx speaks about, for here it is the base that follows the form. Do all backward societies contradict the law of Marx? Of course.³⁸

Such a description suggests that the development of backward countries either is or appears to be “abnormal,” as it moves in leaps or zigzags. Yet it spares the respective societies the shocks, painful struggles and victims of the bottom-up type of revolutionary change.

Arguing that in backward societies “the legal and political superstructure” determines “the economic structure of society,” Gherea reversed the causal relationship between the two as drawn by Marx. In his words, in the case of backward societies, “it is the base that follows the form.” Thus while insisting on the inevitability of capitalist development, Gherea committed himself to a voluntaristic explanation of change through political initiatives at the top.³⁹

According to Gherea the mission of the socialists in backward countries is to mobilize and organize the social classes that will take the road to socialism. In this respect, their struggle could not take forms any different from those of the socialists in the advanced countries. However, the obligations of the socialists in backward countries were more complex and controversial, as they had to fight to abolish the remnants of the feudal order, as well as all obstacles on the way to capitalist development, and, simultaneously, to protect the workers’ interests in the course of this development. As a follower of the original Marxist idea, Gherea did not believe in the possibility of leaping into socialism from a feudal and agrarian society facilitated by an alliance between the workers in the villages and the towns.⁴⁰

Gherea’s most original work is undoubtedly *Neo-Serfdom*, published in 1910⁴¹ as a response to the peasant revolts in 1907. The book was conceived as part of a larger study intended to address social issues in Romania as a whole. Although Gherea did not live to realize this plan, in *Neo-Serfdom*

³⁸ Gherea, “Post-scriptum sau cuvinte uitate,” 212.

³⁹ Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 76–77.

⁴⁰ Aderca, *C. Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 82–84.

⁴¹ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoioabăgia. Studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Soccec, 1910); Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 4, 11–370 (Neoioabăgia); the excerpts used hereunder are from Neoioabăgia de Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, <http://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/Neoioab%C4%83gia>.

he managed to address the most important social problems concerning the country's development after a major social cataclysm.

The book's main idea is that in spite of its modern, capitalist image, Romania still remained a semi-feudal country. A capitalist legal structure was introduced, but it coexisted with a medieval economic structure in terms of agricultural production. To prove this Gherea analyzed the Agrarian Reform of 1864, which legalized compulsory labor in the form of labor contracts, and the subsequent economic laws, which preserved the conditions of a system that Gherea dubbed neo-serfdom (*neoiobăgia*). These conditions doomed the majority of Romanians to abject poverty, which led to the peasant revolt of 1907. Gherea described the specific agricultural problem in the country through the overlapping of four basic principles: "relations of production which are largely servile or feudal; liberal-bourgeois laws, which have turned into illusions and lies and have left peasants at the arbitrary will of the big landowners; protective legislation, which declares the inalienability of rural land and regulates the relations between landlords and workers—relations that originate from the first two principles; a shortage of land for the so-called small peasant owners required for working and supporting their families—a fact that forces them to become a vassal to the big landlords."

Gherea defined this economic structure as a "dual regime—both capitalist and feudal," in which the landlord "has from feudalism the advantage of compulsory labor [...] without the disadvantage of being liable to reciprocal obligation to the worker, and has from capitalism the absolute freedom to exploit the worker without the disadvantages arising from the free exchange of labor [...]." On the other side, the peasantry "has from serfdom the disadvantage of compulsory labor without the advantage of reciprocal obligations to it from the landlord, and it has from capitalism the disadvantage of unrestricted exploitation without the advantage of genuine freedom of labor." Thus, according to Gherea, the "ruling economic class has succeeded in realizing all the advantages of both systems for itself and imposing all disadvantages of both systems on the peasantry." In other words, the ruling class in Romania managed to create for itself "a garland of roses without thorns, while leaving the thorns, and only the thorns, to the peasants."

The only adequate solution to the agrarian problem, according to Gherea, was a "full, thorough and immediate abolition of this evil regime, the regime of neo-serfdom." This solution, which actually favored capitalism in agriculture, would lead to proletarianization of the peasants, most of whom had already turned proletarian. However, according to Gherea,

this would be exactly the way to create “an opportunity for a subsequent improvement of the material, moral, cultural and political-social situation of the agrarian proletariat.” The abolition of neo-serfdom, meaning the cancellation of the servile obligations, would strengthen the position of the middle-sized owners, while the big owners would turn to progressive and intensive production, or else would be forced to sell their excessively large estates, thus benefiting the peasants and small owners. Unlike the Marxist model of capitalist development, which denied the peasants an active political role, Gherea thought that the peasantry should be the agent for organizing agricultural production around capitalist principles. Yet he assigned the leadership role for eradicating the semi-feudal regime to the urban proletariat, whose class consciousness was higher and who had already organized into a political party.

The remedy in Gherea's opinion, therefore, was to transform Romania from neo-serfdom into a capitalist and bourgeois country. As the only tool for this transformation he saw not revolution, but the introduction of universal suffrage, which would take political power away from the oligarchy and pass it on to the productive strata interested in the progress of the country. Gherea rebuffed the thesis of the agrarian populists (*poporaniști*) that Romania ought to remain “an eminently agrarian country” with the following categorical statement: “If this were the future of the country, the country would have no future. An eminently agrarian country is a country that is eminently poor and economically and culturally backward.” In his view the only certain remedy for Romanian poverty was industrialization, which would also ensure the future of the peasantry. Again distancing himself from Marxist doctrine, in his analysis of the Romanian society and the national economy, Gherea focused not on the socialist principle of replacing private with public property but on the industrialization and modernization of the country.⁴²

Gherea found new arguments for his critical analysis of the Romanian agrarian question by comparing it with the Bulgarian case. In 1913 he explained Bulgaria's superiority over Romania (discussed by the Romanian public) by the fact that the bourgeois institutions introduced in the neighboring country “do not contradict” the existing relations of production “so much” as to impede their mutual adaptation. He saw contradictions only between the new institutions on the one hand and the “lack of education” and “the old Oriental manners” on the other hand. However,

⁴² *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 3/1, 421–422; Aderca, C. *Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 85–98; Kitch, “Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea,” 79–81.

these factors, just like the relations of production, did not prevent the functioning of the institutions. In short, Gherea concluded: "[...] the big advantage of Bulgaria over us [Romania] is that the Bulgarians are a free people, while we are still a people of neo-serfs."⁴³

The abnormal relationship between the base and the superstructure, which in Gherea's view caused the underdevelopment of capitalism in Romania, also forced him to reject revolutionary socialism. Revolution, a major feature of Marxist ideology, was rejected because the relation between the base and the superstructure in the country did not fit Marx's definition of a revolutionary situation. Instead, Gherea opted for a reformist strategy by calling for liberal political initiatives that would encourage the capitalist economic development of semi-feudal Romania. His choice was dictated by the Marxist understanding that socialist struggle could take place only in a capitalist economy. Gherea's reformist strategy actually reflected the weakness of the Romanian socialist movement and the hostile environment in which it was forced to develop. Yet it deprived the movement of its distinctively socialist character and predetermined its failure. Gherea's approach was to adapt Marxism to the conditions of a backward country, but the result was to move away from Marxism.⁴⁴

*Dimităr Blagoev versus Yanko Sakăzov:
Narrow or Broad Socialism?*

Early socialism in Bulgaria is associated primarily with Dimităr Blagoev (1856–1924), who established himself as Bulgaria's foremost Marxist adherent and theoretician before World War I.⁴⁵ He also became the founder and leader of the first social democratic group in Russia, as well as of the first social democratic party in the Balkans, and, after its split in 1903, of the party of the Narrow Socialists. In addition to being a theoretician and politician of "Narrow" socialism in Bulgaria, Blagoev was also an active literary critic, translator and journalist, as well as an editor of newspapers and journals.

⁴³ Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 2, 172–175 (Noi și Bulgarii. Fragment inedit din Neoibăgia, 1913).

⁴⁴ Kitch, "Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea," 87–89.

⁴⁵ See "Teoreticheska diskusiya 'Blagoev i vremeto, 150 godini ot rozhdenieto na Dimităr Blagoev,'" *Ponedelnik* 9, nos. 7–8 (2006), 7–68; Dimităr Blagoev, *Izbrani istoricheski săchineniya*, vols. 1–2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1985); Yordan Yotov, Kiril Vasilev, Stoyanka Pobornikova and Tatyana Koleva, *Dimităr Blagoev: Biografiya* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1979); *Dimităr Blagoev—belezhit teoretik i revolyutsioner. Sbornik po sluchay 120 godini ot rozhdenieto mu* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1976); Dimităr Blagoev, *Săchineniya*, vols. 1–20 (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BKP, 1957–1961).

Born in southern Macedonia, Blagoev attended secondary school in Odessa and continued his education at Saint Petersburg University in Russia. His ideological formation began under the influence of the works and ideas of Lassalle, Chernyshevsky and Bakunin. After 1881 he became involved in public activities and in 1883 created the first social democratic Marxist group in Russia. The group established contact with the circle of the Russian social democrat Georgi Plekhanov in Geneva, who would become a major influence for Bulgarian social democracy. In 1885 Blagoev was arrested and extradited by the Russian government. He returned to Bulgaria, where he began to propagate socialist ideas. From June to August 1885 he published the country's first Marxist journal, *Săvremenniy pokazatel*, (Contemporary Index) which, in addition to Marxist ideas, welcomed certain ideas related to utopian socialism and *narodnichestvo* (populism). After teaching in various cities and experiencing frequent dismissals due to his subversive views, in 1890 he settled in Veliko Tărnovo, where he worked to create a national party of the working class.

After the founding of the Social Democratic Party in 1891, Blagoev became not only its leader but also the leading ideologue of the movement. From 1897 to 1923 he edited the party's theoretical publication, the journal *Novo vreme* (New Times). He was the author of a number of essays on issues related to Marxist philosophy, political economy, history, aesthetics and Bulgarian literature. In a number of disputes with the Unionists (1891–1894), the *narodniks*, and especially the Broad Socialists around Yanko Sakăzov before the split in 1903, Blagoev stood out as a staunch defender of orthodox Marxism.⁴⁶

Blagoev's booklet *What Is Socialism and Can It Take Root Here?* published right after the party's founding congress in 1891, was very important to the early history of socialism in Bulgaria, as it served as a primary source of information and inspiration for the Bulgarian Marxists.⁴⁷ Vasil Kolarov, one of the later activists of the socialist and communist movement in the country and in the Komintern, even called it the "Bulgarian Communist Manifesto." The booklet was actually a response to some articles published in 1887 by Zahari Stoyanov, a former Bulgarian national

⁴⁶ Blagoev's views in those disputes are presented in his book *Contribution to the History of Socialism in Bulgaria*, published in 1906, where he applied Marxist analysis to Bulgarian history: Blagoev, *Izbrani istoricheski săchineniya*, vol. 1, 181–557; Dimităr Blagoev, *Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsializma v Bălgariya* (Sofia: BKP, 1948).

⁴⁷ Dimităr Blagoev, "Shto e sotsializăm i ima li toy pochva u nas?" in idem, *Săchineniya*, vol. 1, 437–532; Yotov et al., *Dimităr Blagoev*, 73–78.

revolutionary, subsequently a politician and writer. Stoyanov claimed that since “the natural resources” of Bulgaria were owned by the entire population in “fraternal equality, primevally and communally,” socialism could not take root in Bulgaria. Blagoev set out to disprove this claim.

The booklet first outlined the ideas and principles of socialism according to Marx and Engels. Armed with the Marxist tenets, Blagoev analyzed the social and economic processes in Bulgaria and found the following: the decline of the old crafts, the ruin of the artisans and the creation of artisanal workshops with hired workers, the decline of smallholders and their transition to wage labor, the establishment of factories and joint-stock companies, increased property differentiation, and the appearance of class divisions in society. On this basis he claimed that Bulgarian society had already embarked on the road to capitalist production and exchange; the two major classes of capitalist society were present—bourgeoisie and proletariat; the state itself had become a tool of bourgeois rule; and the proletariat was subject to endless exploitation. Blagoev then concluded that “socialism can take root” in Bulgaria.

Blagoev raised two practical questions concerning the new socialist movement in the country. As for where the movement was to seek supporters, his obvious choice was among the proletariat, followed by the strata of peasants, craftsmen and small traders, who would be “the future proletarians,” and “the educated people” or intelligentsia, who were also suitable to take part in socialist activities. As for the nature of the movement itself, he preferred peaceful, open and legal activity but believed that if the government did not tolerate it, then other forms of struggle also had to be adopted. The main task that Blagoev set for the socialists in the country was raising the class consciousness and organizing the Bulgarian proletariat.

While the ideas developed in the booklet were based mainly on Marxism, certain influences from (Russian) *narodnichestvo* and Ferdinand Lassalle can also be detected. An example of the latter is the idea of decentralizing the state and organizing it as a federative union of consumer cooperatives and designating state property under capitalism as a form of socialization. Later on, drawing on his experience, Blagoev disavowed some of the ideas in the booklet, such as overestimating the importance of general suffrage in the socialists’ struggle for political power.

Blagoev’s booklet became the subject of strong criticism by various groups, which initiated the first significant controversy in the history of Bulgarian socialism. Intellectuals of the circle around the literary journal *Misāl* (Thought) tried to counter Marxism with a “nationalism properly

understood,” embracing “all humane ideas” of the society of the time. Blagoev responded by citing the Marxist proposition of the transient nature of bourgeois nationalism, which is limited to the interests of the respective nation and destined to be replaced by proletarian internationalism.

Blagoev’s propositions were most strongly criticized by the *narodniks* associated with the journal *Lucha* (Rays), published since November 1891 in the provincial town of Pazardzhik. Particularly active among them were the Russian emigrants Vladimir K. Debagori-Mokrievich (alias Prokopiev), Georgi Balamezov, Petăr Gabe and others. Prokopiev argued that Marxism was not applicable to an agrarian country like Bulgaria, where capitalism was not adequately developed. He criticized Blagoev for applying borrowed social categories without reference to the local reality. He also stressed that socialism was disseminated due to the efforts of certain intellectuals rather than to the country’s natural economic development. The *narodniks* challenged the development of capitalism in agriculture by employing economic arguments as well as allusions to the specific character and “low cultural level” of the Bulgarian people. They placed their hopes in the intelligentsia and called for a “humane democratism” that would lead society to socialism. Blagoev responded with analysis and criticism of *narodnichestvo* for being a “reactionary” movement and an ideology for the preservation of small-scale property and production. At the same time, he rejected “humane democratism” for its lack of a sustainable social and class base in Bulgaria.⁴⁸

As for whether Bulgaria should opt for industrial or agricultural development, Blagoev questioned the viability of small-scale agriculture and handicrafts, as well as the need to support their development. As a social democrat, he believed in the inevitable bankruptcy and proletarianization of the peasants and artisans in the course of industrialization and the concentration of production, without much concern for the social cost. In the spirit of Marxism, he advocated the development of large-scale production, which facilitates the dissemination of socialism and forms its revolutionary force, the proletariat, who would put an end to capitalism.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Evlogi Buzhashki, *Dimităr Blagoev i pobedata na marksizma v bălgarskoto sotsialisticheskoto dvizhenie 1885–1903* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BKP, 1960); Yotov et al., *Dimităr Blagoev*, 79–88; Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 185–190.

⁴⁹ Dimităr Blagoev, *Ikonomicheskoto razvitie na Bălgaria. Industriya ili zemedelie?* (Varna: Georgi Bakalov, 1903). The reverse argument about the sustainability of small-scale agriculture and the need for its support by the state and the fostering of a cooperative movement was advanced by Todor G. Vlaykov, “Belezhki po zemedelcheskiya văpros,” *Demokraticheski pregled* 2, no. 20 (1904); 3, nos. 5–6 (1905), 11–15, 17–18.

During the first Russian Revolution of 1905–1906, Blagoev began leaning towards the ideas of the Russian Bolsheviks, but he did not accept some of Lenin's postulates. Like Gherea, Blagoev did not share Lenin's view on the alliance of workers and peasants in the name of the revolution. He believed that the revolution would succeed first in the developed capitalist countries, and he therefore opposed taking up arms in Bulgaria. Later on, after the October 1917 Russian Revolution and World War I, Blagoev warned that "the revolution in Bulgaria will depend 75 percent on the external situation and 25 percent on the internal situation."⁵⁰ "Grandfather," as he was respectfully called by his followers, remained basically an orthodox Marxist.

Blagoev's main opponent in the Bulgarian socialist movement was his one-time associate Yanko Sakăzov (1860–1941).⁵¹ He was the chief ideologue of what was known as Broad Socialism—the Bulgarian version of the reformist wing of the international socialist movement—and leader of the Broad Socialists' party after the split with the "Narrows" in 1903.

Born in Shumen (in northeastern Bulgaria), Sakăzov was educated in a wide range of subjects in Russia, where he studied with Blagoev, as well as in Western Europe (Germany, England and France). During his studies he became familiar with various left-wing ideas, such as those of the Russian *narodniks* and revolutionary democrats, Marx and Engels, Louis Blanc and Pierre Proudhon. After his return to Bulgaria in 1884, he came under the influence of Blagoev, with whom he worked together as a teacher; he got acquainted with the works of Plekhanov and gradually embraced the ideas of socialism. In 1892 Sakăzov became one of the founders of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union, which, unlike the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party established by Blagoev the previous year, declared the economic struggle to be a higher priority than attempting to set up a political organization of the workers. After the merging of the union with the party in 1894, Sakăzov was elected member of the party leadership and of the editorial board of the party's journal. He also became one of the first

⁵⁰ Dimităr Blagoev, "Tesni sotsialisti' s anarhistichni glavi," *Novo vreme*, 1919, nos. 10–11.

⁵¹ Yanko Sakăzov, *Sotsialnata demokratsiya*, ed. Dimităr Ivanov (Sofia: Fondatsiya Arété—Fol, Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2008); Yanko Sakăzov, *Inteligentsiyata i neynata rolya v obshtesvoto. Izbrani sáchineniya (Sotsialdemokraticheska biblioteka)*, ed. Milen Kumanov (Sofia: IK "Hristo Botev," 1993, first published in 1906); *Yanko Sakăzov (1860–1930). Yubileen sbornik po sluchay 70 godini ot rozhdenieto i 40 godini obshtestvena deynost* (Sofia, 1930).

two socialist deputies in the Bulgarian Parliament and remained deputy in 1894–1896, 1902–1903, and after 1911.

Unlike Blagoev, Sakāzov did not approach Marxism mechanistically but in accordance with the conditions of a predominantly agrarian Bulgaria, where the social stratum of the industrial workers was still in the making and exceedingly small, while the political system lacked effective democratic procedures. In the heat of the rural upheavals after the introduction of in-kind tithe on agricultural production in 1900, he began publishing the new magazine *Obshto delo* (Common Cause). On its pages Sakāzov advocated the revision of Marxism in the vein of the German social democrat Eduard Bernstein⁵² and pleaded for “common action” by the various “productive strata” in the country. These ideas stirred a divisive debate among the Bulgarian social democrats and ultimately led to the split of the party three years later. The debate originated in disputes about the organizational forms and the character of the socialist movement in Bulgaria; at its core stood issues concerning the social milieu for spreading socialist ideas, the political demands of the movement, the approach to non-proletarian strata (especially peasants) and the relations with other political parties. Sakāzov and Blagoev played the leading roles in these ideological disputes.

In *Obshto delo*, Sakāzov declared himself in favor of establishing a real constitutional government and restoring popular self-government through “cooperation of the productive strata.” The social forces that he addressed in the name of unity and “common cause” were the budding movement of the peasants, the artisans, the commercial and industrial strata and the growing workers’ movement. He argued that this union was needed since the bourgeoisie had failed to complete its historical task of bringing reform and economic development. According to Sakāzov, due to Bulgaria’s complex social and economic conditions, social democracy had to play a dual role. In addition to defending proletarian interests, it also had to carry out “the task of being the main defender of our democratic institutions and almost the only representative of a national economic policy

⁵² Eduard Bernstein (1850–1932) was the founder of Marxist revisionism. He rejected Marx’s predictions about the imminent and inevitable demise of capitalism and the transition to socialism by revolution. The views of Bernstein and Jean Jaurès in France gave rise to a reformist theory asserting that socialism could be achieved through gradual peaceful reforms from within a capitalist system.

that is not in the interest of the capital, but in the interest of the working population.”⁵³

Blagoev and his associates' fierce critiques of Sakǎzov's challenging ideas partly reflected concerns that Bulgaria would, like the social democracies in neighboring Serbia and Romania, become submerged in the huge “petty bourgeoisie.” The Bulgarian social democrats perceived the Serbian Radicals, who were building their social base in the villages and leaned towards nationalist populism, as renegades of socialism (and as having “forgotten” Svetozar Marković's ideas). In turn, the short-lived Romanian attempt to attract peasants to the Social Democratic Party in 1898–1899 had ended in failure and accelerated the disintegration of the party, after which most of its leaders joined the National Liberal Party. Moreover, Blagoev's reaction was consistent with his understanding (adopted from Plekhanov) of the inevitability of the historical evolution towards socialism or the development of socialism according to the logic of absolute necessity. He therefore assumed an “automatic action” of the social laws and opposed any program deviating from the “natural evolution” towards socialism.

Blagoev and his followers blamed Sakǎzov for deviating from the Marxist principle of “class struggle” and for threatening the party's identification with the Bulgarian proletariat. Blagoev asserted that democracy was to be achieved only under the rule of the social democracy; that the only really progressive and revolutionary classes in Bulgaria were the big bourgeoisie and the working class, while in between was the reactionary petty bourgeoisie; that “common cause” was only a fiction since different social strata could never have similar interests; and that Sakǎzov's ideas had nothing to do with Marxism and were nothing but “petty-bourgeois democratism.”⁵⁴ The attitude of Georgi Bakalov (1873–1939), another Bulgarian Marxist, towards the Broads' propaganda was more pragmatic: extending the party's activity beyond the workers would dilute the class character of the new party and reduce it to a “tail” of the bourgeois parties.⁵⁵

⁵³ See, for instance, “Polozhenieto,” *Obshto delo* 1, no. 1, September 18, 1900; “Sotsialnata demokratiya,” *Obshto delo* 1, no. 20, July 7, 1901. Cf. Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 224–231.

⁵⁴ Blagoev, *Sǎchineniya*, vol. 6, 430–431, 438–442 (Pro domo sua), 529–531 (Novoto polozhenie), 613, 621–625 (Sotsializǎm ili demoktarizǎm). See Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 232–237.

⁵⁵ Georgi Bakalov, *Otstǎpnichestvoto ot sotsializma. Kǎm polemikata na rabotnishkata sotsialdemokratska partiya* (Varna, 1903).

To summarize the ideas developed on the pages of the journal *Obshto delo* and address Blagoev's critiques, Sakāzov produced the booklet *Alarm for Ghosts*, written at a time when the split in the party was underway.⁵⁶ The Broad Socialists' leader did not question Marx's main assumptions. However, he considered Marx's theory not a straitjacket into which realities had to be squeezed, but a tool for understanding those realities. In response to the accusation that he had deserted the "class struggle," he argued that progress was the result of the class struggle but also of class cooperation, meaning a joint effort in favor of common social goals. The ideals of national independence, liberty, democracy and economic prosperity do not belong to one class only, and therefore cannot be achieved by this class alone; they are, in fact, goals of the entire society. These goals should not be achieved through violence or in order to satisfy the interests of some groups at the expense of others, but through a "common action" and a legitimate struggle within the boundaries of necessity and common progress. This is why Sakāzov believed that the Social Democratic Party had to combine socialist propaganda with practical policies toward changing the existing political conditions. It had to remain a party of the Bulgarian proletariat, but it also had to be a party of the social development and progress of the entire society.

Sakāzov elaborated his "common cause" theory in a book entitled *Caesarism or Democracy*, published two years after the party's 1903 split.⁵⁷ In it the author laid out his view on how "unconstitutional government" in Bulgaria should be ended, and he pointed the way toward practical action for the Social Democratic Party. Sakāzov singled out the increased political role of Prince Ferdinand, which he called "caesarism," as a major danger and setback in the development of democracy and the equal participation of the working people in state affairs. The major social forces in the country, according to him, were the conservative and the liberal bourgeoisie (which he subdivided into progressive and reactionary) and their respective parties, the urban and rural productive population and the wage workers, whom he identified as the most important drivers of modern production and supporters of democracy. According to the Broad Socialist ideologue, "caesarism" in Bulgaria would end as a result of the common action of the united working class and the lower working

⁵⁶ Yanko Sakāzov, *Trevoga za prizratsi (Nasheto otstāpnichestvo ili tyahnoto nedomislie)* (Sofia: Fondatsiya "Yanko Sakāzov," 1991; first published in 1903).

⁵⁷ Yanko Sakāzov, *Tsezarizām ili demokratsiya* (Sofia, 1905).

masses, which would also sweep along the upper and middle bourgeois strata. These social forces would secure democracy in the country.

The Blagoev-Sakázov debate was undoubtedly based on the two men's political differences concerning the theory and practice of the socialist movement. At the same time, these irreconcilable views took on a distinctly personal nature because of the two party leaders' character; their political ambitions and their long mutual acquaintance. Another example of the rivalry between the two is that they created different versions of Bulgarian history and of the role of Bulgarian socialists in it.⁵⁸

Broad Socialism in Bulgaria, as pointed out in a recent study by Augusta Dimou, was a rather independent ideological product, which drew upon ideas and themes not only from Bernstein, but also from other Western thinkers, as well as from Russian populism. Founded by socialist intellectuals after 1900, this reform socialism was a result of their own experience and of impasses in political practice. The Broads rejected extreme revolutionary rhetoric because it alienated important segments of the population, peasants and small producers, and because it did not address the social problems in Bulgaria. They sought intermediate and immediate solutions to overcome the discrepancy between the introduction of socialism and the local condition of backwardness. Revisionist socialism held an intermediate place between populism, which tried to cancel or bypass capitalism, and social democracy, which was premised on this process. It questioned the uniformity of capitalist development and provided space for diverse paths to socialism. The Broads in Bulgaria "proposed a middle way between voluntarism and determinism." Unlike the voluntarist Agrarian Populists, "they accepted the inevitability of capitalism and made use of the analytical arsenal of Marxism." Unlike the determinist orthodox Marxists, "they insisted on flexibility, inclusiveness and pragmatism." Revisionism in the Bulgarian context differed from revisionism in the Western context. While the former centered on the question of the painful development of capitalism, the latter involved the question of the future of advanced capitalism and the relationship between revolutionary theory and reformist practice.⁵⁹

Revisionist socialism called for immediate action and intervention, de-emphasizing the socialists' ultimate goal. The relativization of class

⁵⁸ Yanko Sakázov, *Inteligentsiyata*, 43–120; Yanko Sakázov, *Bălgarite v svoiyata istoriya* (Sofia: IK Heraklit, 1993; first published in 1917); Blagoev, *Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsializma v Bălgariya* (Sofia: BKP, 1948; first published in 1906).

⁵⁹ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 273–275.

conflict, the stress on the common interest of all classes in upholding civic values, and the possibilities of furthering political rights within the context of a functioning democracy were characteristic of Bernstein's revisionism, which suited backward countries like Bulgaria due to their social composition and institutional democratization. Yet Sakāzov and his colleagues did not endorse all aspects of Bernstein's critique and adapted other aspects to the circumstances in Bulgaria. They sought a model that would allow for economic growth and at the same time provide a protectionist strategy in favor of the exposed social strata, with the state as mediator.⁶⁰

The ideas of Narrow and Broad Socialism in Bulgaria did not find wide social support, but they fought each other relentlessly, both in the form of ideological debate and in actual politics.

* * *

A comparison of the main strains of thought in early socialism in the Balkan countries throws light onto a variety of social visions seen as challenging by some and exotic by others. The Balkan socialist thinkers received the socialist ideas either through Russian mediation or directly from the West and either applied them dogmatically (Blagoev) or adapted them creatively through their own understanding and in accordance with their national contexts (Marković, Gherea, Sakāzov). As ideologues, they sought, but faced difficulties in finding, the points of intersection between the Western and the Eastern versions of socialism as a cure for the ills of capitalism on the one hand, and the slowly modernizing societies in the Balkans on the other hand. Their knowledge was broad, and their analyses covered various aspects of the reality. They had significant influence at the national level as leaders whose conceptual work outlived them, although subsequent political developments changed how they were perceived and evaluated.

The comparison should take into account the historical point in time when the Balkan socialist ideologists were active. While Marković's intense public activity in Serbia occurred only in the early 1870s, Gherea and Blagoev, who were almost the same age, were politically active from the mid-1880s until the end of World War I, while Sakāzov maintained a public presence after the war. Marković's ideology was closest to Russian

⁶⁰ Ibid., 276–277.

populism, for during his early career, Marxism did not yet dominate the socialist movement. Gherea distanced himself from populism early on, and, having accepted Marxism, went further by rethinking and reforming it to suit the conditions in Romania and the underdeveloped countries in general. Populist borrowings can be found in Blagoev's first public appearances, but his work after the early 1890s made him the most orthodox Marxist of the three. Both Blagoev and Gherea established themselves as Marxists opposed to the Populists. Sakázov's broad socialism of "common cause" contained elements of populism and Western Marxist revisionism, but on the whole he proposed a course of development midway between the voluntarism of the Populists and the determinism of orthodox Marxists, which was adapted to national circumstances.

The social views of the socialist ideologists discussed above were also conditioned by and reflected specific national conditions. All three societies were agrarian, but with significant differences between independent smallholders in Serbia and Bulgaria and large estates with dependent peasants in Romania. Populism from above was favorably received by Serbian peasants. Peasants in Bulgaria acquired their own political spokesmen from early on. The peasant question in Romania caused dramatic social upheavals that made socialism look particularly irrelevant. In Serbia Marković sought populist solutions to bypass capitalism and move into socialism through a "return" to the traditional peasant *zadruga*. Gherea, by contrast, saw the solution to the peasant question in breaking the feudal remnants in Romanian agrarian relations, as well as through accelerated capitalist development. In line with Marxism, Gherea, Blagoev and Sakázov remained averse to the revolutionary potential of non-proletarianized peasants.

Marković, Blagoev and Sakázov combined their interest in theory with political activity, while Gherea was primarily an ideologist—he was perhaps the most profound and original interpreter of socialism in the Balkans before World War I. His theoretical contributions, as well as those of Sakázov and the "Broad Socialists" in Bulgaria, posed the greatest challenges to the orthodox Marxist ideology and deviated from it the most. The views of the Balkan socialist thinkers reflect the paths of the Balkan socialist movements charted by their attempts to turn theory into practice in order to cure the ills of societies at an early stage of capitalist development.

There is little explicit evidence of ideological connections between the Balkan socialists. Krăstyo (Christian) Rakovski (1873–1941), a prominent

figure in the Bulgarian and Romanian socialist movement, said that his generation was educated by the works of Svetozar Marković.⁶¹ Dimităr Blagoev acknowledged the influence of the utopian ideas (called “sentimental socialism”) of the Serbian socialist and educator Vasa Pelagić (1833–1899) on the first socialists in Bulgaria.⁶² The transitions from populism to Marxism in the three Balkan countries were performed almost simultaneously (with special circumstances in Serbia) and were based on external models. Mutual influences between the Balkan socialist ideologues were not particularly intense despite personal acquaintances,⁶³ some translations,⁶⁴ and organizational contacts. Personal contacts were quite sporadic, while organizational contacts intensified relatively late, mainly on the eve of and during the wars; the translated works were not sufficient and the language barrier remained, as Blagoev noted in a letter.⁶⁵ The exchange of periodicals and books as well as acts of solidarity among the Balkan socialists were important for the exchange of information and experiences or the formation of attitudes towards the others, but they did not extend to the conceptual models. Therefore, certain conceptual similarities can be explained mostly by the common Russian and Western sources that the Balkan socialist thinkers used as a frame of reference and tried to apply to their own backward social environments. Apart from that, there were some influences in the negative sense that they tried to

⁶¹ Skerlić, *Svetozar Marković*, 249.

⁶² Blagoev, *Săchineniya*, vol. 11, 101 (Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsializma v Bălgariya). Persecuted by the Serbian authorities in 1880s, Pelagić spent some time in Romania and Bulgaria. After 1882 and especially during the 1890s, his articles were published in the Bulgarian press, and his works were translated into Bulgarian. See, for example, Vasa Pelagić, *Ot kakvo se razhdat buntovete?* trans. Georgi A. Kărdzhiev (Ruse, 1882).

⁶³ For example, Blagoev and Gherea knew each other since 1883; in 1910 the Romanian socialist press called the Narrow Socialist leader “the Bulgarian Gherea,” and in 1915 Blagoev attended the celebration of Gherea’s sixtieth anniversary in Romania. Petrana Atanasova, “Dokumenti i materiali za vrăzkite na Dimităr Blagoev s rumănskoto sotsialistichsko dvizhenie,” *Izvestiya na Instituta po istoriya na BKP* 38 (1978), 480–482.

⁶⁴ A translation of parts of Svetozar Marković’s *The Real Trends in Science and Life* was published in Bulgaria in 1903: Svetozar Markovich, *Nauka i religiya*, trans. by G.B. (Varna: G. Bakalov, 1903). Some essays by Dobrogeanu-Ghera were translated and published in Bulgarian, one of them translated from French: Konstantin Dobrodzhanu-Gerya, *Materi-alisticheskoto razbırane na istoriyata*, trans. from French by Zarin [Petăr Cholakov] (Sofia, 1894); Konstantin Dobrodzhanu-Gerya, *Rumăno-bălgarskiyat konflikt*, trans. from Romanian by Iv. D. Mitkov (Silistra, 1913). Other texts appeared in 1909–1911 in the journal *Săvremennik*, ed. Georgi Bakalov (Konstantin Dobrodzhanu-Gerya, “Moralniyat stimul,” *Săvremennik* 1, no. 10 [June 1, 1909], 577–580; Konstantin Dobrodzhanu-Gerya, “Pisateli grazhdani,” *Săvremennik* 2, no. 1 [November 1, 1909], 65–67; no. 2 [December 1, 1909], 132–142).

⁶⁵ “Nobody Can Read Me in Romanian (Blagoev–Rakovski, 14.06.1906),” Blagoev, *Săchineniya*, vol. 11, 353–355.

avoid what they considered wrong with the others. Thus the Bulgarian (Narrow) Socialists referred to the experience of the Serbian Radicals and the Romanian socialists in order to avoid digressing toward nationalism or diluting the class character of their party.

2. REVOLUTIONARIES AND REFORMISTS

The distinction between a revolutionary and a reformist current in the socialist movement in the late nineteenth century is drawn primarily on the basis of the strategies with regard to the bourgeois parties and the state. Almost all socialist leaders agreed that a “revolutionary” process was a prerequisite for replacing capitalism with socialism. However, during the last two decades of the century (paradoxically, at a time when the Marxist doctrine was gaining ground in the labor movement) more and more socialist leaders thought that the transition to the new system could be achieved through legal reforms of the existing system.

The so-called “orthodox Marxists” or revolutionaries adhered strictly to the “scientific socialism” of Marx and Engels. They refused any cooperation with the bourgeoisie and tried to detach the proletariat from the rest of society. They “denounced” the achievements of democracy (such as civil rights, general enfranchisement and social laws) as a means of “diverting” workers from their real interests; they declared themselves against reformism and in favor of outright opposition; they supported the use of revolutionary violence, the establishment of dictatorship of the proletariat, and the abolition of private property, capitalist enterprises and the bourgeois state.⁶⁶ The consolidation of capitalism, the progress of parliamentary democracy and the ongoing social reforms, especially in the field of labor, hindered the spread of this “orthodox Marxism” in the developed industrial states.

The reformists, in turn, defended the idea that the gradual evolution of the capitalist system could help eliminate the roots of exploitation and improve the living conditions of the proletariat. Therefore, they did not call for the abolition of capitalism through direct violence, nor did they denounce the parliamentary system. Although most identified themselves as Marxists (except for the Labour Party in Great Britain), the reformists criticized certain propositions of “scientific socialism” and offered a “revised

⁶⁶ Karl Kautsky (1854–1938) (known as the “pope of socialism”), Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in Germany, Jules Guesde in France and others expressed similar ideas.

Marxism.”⁶⁷ Over the last two decades of the nineteenth century, moderate socialist doctrines became widespread in many European countries and were known by various names—“reformism,” “revisionism,” “gradualism,” “legalism,” “possibilism,” “evolutionism” and “transformism.”

Reformism drew on experiences of revolutionary failure (the defeat of the European revolutions of 1848–1849 and of the Paris Commune in 1871), on the social concessions to workers achieved through political negotiations, and on capitalism’s ability to adapt itself and overcome its crises, as well as on certain moral considerations in favor of compromise between classes. The reformists did not renounce class struggle but opposed revolutionary violence and abandoned the idea of dictatorship of the proletariat. The purpose of reformism was, in fact, to sow the seeds of socialism into capitalism (more social rights for workers and a partial redistribution of wealth). To achieve this goal, its supporters proposed a political strategy based on moderation and pragmatism. Dominated by German social democracy, the Second International took a Marxist stand and rejected reformism in theory. The International Congress held in Amsterdam in 1904 condemned socialists joining “bourgeois governments.” In practice the International was pursuing a centrist policy, while at the national level, reformism expanded its influence in almost all European countries.⁶⁸

The division between revolutionaries and reformists among the Balkan socialists had its own particular character resulting from the distinct environment in which socialist ideas were being disseminated. The different social environments—consolidated capitalism and expanding democracies and social systems in the Western societies, underdeveloped capitalism and slowly changing traditional societies in the Balkans—involved different starting points and called for different priorities. Therefore the Balkan socialists set aside the questions concerning the future proletarian revolution, revolutionary violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat and focused on the nature, current goals and tactics of their political movements.

⁶⁷ In Germany the “revisionist” Eduard Bernstein challenged specific conclusions of Marx’s *Capital* and thought a peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism was possible. In France the “independent socialists” Alexandre Millerand, René Vivitani and Jean Jaurès committed themselves primarily to the adoption of social legislation for the protection of workers and did not denounce universal suffrage and parliamentarism. The Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov allowed for temporary alliances with the bourgeois parties in order to resolve social problems in anticipation of the revolution. In Great Britain reformism established itself as early as the 1860s and became the basis of what was called the “Labourist” model.

⁶⁸ Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice*, 528–531.

The Ways of Serbian Socialism

The workers' and socialist movement in Serbia dates from the 1870s. The early socialist ideas were warmly welcomed by a segment of the Serbian youth and intelligentsia. However, the movement stagnated after the untimely death of its first ideologue and organizer, Svetozar Marković, in 1875. The production and consumption cooperatives that he had created soon disintegrated, and his followers went their separate ways. The evolutionary and the revolutionary undercurrents discernible in Marković's views caused a split among his disciples in the 1870s and 1880s. Both groups—Radicals and Social Revolutionaries—pursued the same socialist goal, that is, the creation of a "people's state," but they differed in their approach. Their longevity and political fate were also different. While the former became the most influential party in Serbia in spite of the fact that they had to contend with the separation of the "Young" Radicals, the latter disappeared from the political scene and were replaced by the Marxist social democrats.⁶⁹

As an original adaptation of populism, the Serbian radical movement was unique in the Balkans. In 1881 a majority of Marković's followers formed the Serbian Popular Radical Party (*Narodna radikalna stranka*), which was the first officially established party in Serbia and represented the evolutionist undercurrent in the movement's legacy. The Radicals opted for a broad political activity, "for the people and through the people," following the revolutionary concept of the Russian *narodnik* Pyotr Lavrov (1823–1900). Under the leadership of Nikola Pašić (1845–1926), the Radicals originally attempted to adhere to the socialist program formulated by Marković and continued the struggle for communal autonomy and reforms to aid the peasants, which had begun in the National Assembly (Skupština). They also appropriated the legacy of the peasant group led by Adam Bogosavljević, which denounced the bureaucratic state in the Skupština since 1874 and demanded its abolition.

However, after the suppression of the Timok Rebellion in 1883, instigated by the Radicals themselves against the government's decision to disarm the peasants, these followers of Marković abandoned socialist radicalism and adopted a policy of bourgeois *Realpolitik* and nationalism.

⁶⁹ See in detail Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 59–156; Mishkova, *Prispoblyavane na svobodata*, 161–192; Perović, *Srpski socialisti* 19. Bogdanović, "Serbia," 421–438; Lapčević, *Istorija socializma u Srbiji*, 89–180; McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 267–274.

Initially, the Radicals advocated development of the economy, more equitable distribution of national wealth, civil rights, popular sovereignty and the liberation of the Serbian nation in alliance with other Balkan peoples, which in effect meant the creation of a federation of Balkan states. Their foreign policy orientation was pro-Russian. In ideological terms, they sought gradual reforms intended to deter the development of capitalism while creating some sort of state socialism. In practical terms they organized themselves into a monolithic party, which succeeded in mobilizing considerable popular support and presenting itself as the party of the Serbian peasants, and led the opposition movement against the autocratic rule of the Serbian court and state bureaucracy. However, the peasants' demands and expectations, as well as the persecution of the party leaders by the Serbian authorities after the Timok Rebellion, forced them to change policies. The Radical Party ultimately did not manage to do what it had set out to do but did what was actually possible. It paved the way for the development of capitalism and, having transformed from a party of the opposition into a party of the establishment, it became the main advocate of this development. The peasants continued to be the largest group among the party's adherents, but by World War I the party had built a more bourgeois profile, attracting merchants, industrialists and wealthier peasants. The great influence of the party can be explained mainly by its evolution towards nationalism.

As part of the opposition to the Obrenović dynasty, the Radicals profited from its fall, and their party firmly established itself in government between 1903 and 1918. Their leader, Pašić, remained the strongest politician in Serbia and became the chief architect of the first Yugoslavia. In the long term, radicalism as ideology became synonymous with the Serbian national idea, whereas its political practice when in power *de facto* transformed the regime into a "party state."

Following the split of the Popular Radical Party in 1901, the "Young" Radical dissidents founded the Independent Radical Party (*Samostalna radikalna stranka*). The secession was caused by the readiness of the "Old" Radical faction, led by Pašić, to break with the party's socialist-populist and democratic traditions and accept an accommodation with the autocratic King Alexander I Obrenović in order to share power with the party's former political enemies, the Progressives.⁷⁰ In 1905 the "Young" dissidents,

⁷⁰ See the chapter on liberalism in this volume. The Serbian Progressive Party (*Srpska napredna stranka*) originated in the conservative circles and was close to the prince/king. The party shared the ideas of conservative liberalism and had an Austrophile foreign-policy orientation.

who now called themselves “Independent Radicals,” adopted a program of their own, essentially meant to restore the Radical program of 1881: parliamentary monarchy with a unicameral parliament, tax reduction and the creation of a Balkan alliance of free nations, later replaced by the creation of Yugoslavia. Unlike the “Old” Radicals, the “Young” Radicals drew inspiration from Western political models and took a leftist social and liberal stance. This new party became the main political opponent of the Serbian socialists, since it attracted, among others, the poor strata of the small producers, who were also the chief source of recruits for the socialists.⁷¹

Yet another group of Marković’s adherents opposed the “bourgeois tendencies” of Pašić’s faction and followed the revolutionary undercurrent. Soon after the formation of the Radical Party in 1881, these social revolutionaries created a movement that claimed to be the true heir of Marković’s legacy. They opted for a narrow socialist organization closer to the Jacobin-Blanquist stream of the Russian revolutionary movement on the model of the Russian “People’s Will” (*Narodnaya Volya*).⁷² Led by Dimitrije Mita Cenić (1851–1888) and Dragiša Stanojević (1844–1918), they attempted to propagate Marković’s ideas in a number of newspapers and had success among the students. However, they lacked organized structures and popular support, and their movement ended in failure in the 1890s.⁷³ This failure is explained by the strong influence of the Radical Party among the peasantry, whose support the social revolutionaries sought, as well as by the lack of a leader of Pašić’s caliber.

In the late nineteenth century, the utopian socialist ideas of the Serbian Vaso Pelagić (1833–1899)⁷⁴ spread throughout several Balkan countries. A native of Bosnia, he was an educator and a clergyman, but above all a revolutionary and a journalist, whose works criticized the existing institutions and advocated social liberation, equality and fraternity. Persecuted by the Ottoman, Austrian and Serbian authorities, Pelagić was exiled, interned and imprisoned. He spent some time in Romania and Bulgaria. In 1892 Pelagić appealed for the creation of a socialist party in Serbia.

⁷¹ The party of the “Young” Radicals was led, in turn, by Ljubomir Živković (1902–1905), Ljubomir Stojanović (1905–1912) and Ljubomir Davidović (1912–1919). After World War I it formed the largest group in the first political party to be founded in interwar Yugoslavia, the Serbian Democratic Party.

⁷² *Narodnaya Volya* (1879–1883) was a left-wing, anti-government terrorist organization, whose program combined socialist and democratic reforms and whose members believed that Russia could achieve socialism through a peasant revolution, bypassing the stage of capitalism.

⁷³ Lapčević, *Istorija socializma u Srbiji*, 89–108; McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 272; Bogdanović, Serbia, 425.

⁷⁴ Lapčević, *Istorija socializma u Srbiji*, 109–124.

In the 1890s the influence of populist and agrarian socialism in Serbia was challenged by the orthodox socialist ideology of Marx and Engels. The legacy of the founder of Serbian socialism retained its considerable influence upon the intelligentsia, as Svetozar Marković remained the primary political role model for socialists and democrats. But the new social democrats regarded Marković as a figure of purely historical significance.⁷⁵

The Marxist period in the Serbian socialist and labor movement is associated primarily with the appearance of the social democrats and their party.⁷⁶ Since the mid-1890s some Serbian socialists and the Craftsmen Workers' Union had been discussing the formation of a social democratic party in Serbia. King Alexander I Obrenović's authoritarian rule prevented the establishment of a legal workers' party, yet in the early twentieth century their movement was already beginning to take shape: in 1902 a secret political committee of the movement led by Radovan Dragović (1878–1905) and Dimitrije Tucović (1881–1914) was created.

The Serbian Social Democratic Party (SSDP) (*Srpska socijaldemokratska stranka*) was founded after the overthrow of King Alexander I in 1903. The party adopted the basic principles of Marxism on the model of the German social democrats' Erfurt Program, including class struggle, the abolition of capitalist exploitation, the transformation of private ownership of the means of production into public ownership, and solidarity with the proletariat in other countries. The program also contained specific democratic demands such as universal suffrage, a proportional electoral system, national self-determination and self-government of the people in counties and municipalities, free education and free medical care, progressive income taxation, labor legislation to guarantee an eight-hour working day, and regulation of child labor. This program signaled the social democrats' complete abandonment of the nineteenth-century Serbian socialist tradition: the "working people" was divided into "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat"; the development of capitalism was adopted as an indispensable condition for the future socialist transformation of society; the attempts to "save" the handicraft workers by various forms of cooperation and self-help were abandoned, and the "petty-bourgeois illusions" were criticized. One of the leading figures of the party, Dragiša Lapčević (1864–1939), wrote

⁷⁵ McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 273.

⁷⁶ See Mira Bogdanović, "Serbia"; Dubravka Stojanović, "Srpska socijaldemokratska partija između političke moderne i revolucionarne ortodoksije," in *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima XX veka* (Naučni skup) (Belgrade: Institut za noviju istoriju Srbije, 1994), 297–307.

later that “the faster capitalist society develops, the sooner it will outlive itself and the closer we will come to the realization of socialism.”⁷⁷

Such a program justified a “policy of waiting” for capitalism to develop in Serbia. At a time when small property holdings predominated in the country, the realization of the party’s goals required the disintegration of those holdings and the proletarianization of the peasants and the craftsmen. According to the social democrats, the Serbian bourgeoisie was not fit to fulfill its “historical task”—namely, industrialization and proletarianization. Therefore the role of the party was to accelerate the process while assisting those hurt by it. The critique of the government’s economic policy and the struggle for the realization of the democratic demands (the minimum part of the program) had to take place mainly through parliamentary pressure. The party was inclined to neglect trade-union work and struggled for “pure class consciousness.”⁷⁸

According to some estimates, the number of workers organized in trade unions in Serbia was barely 7–10 percent of all workers, while the number of those organized in the party was never more than 3 percent. Party members numbered about 300 in 1904–1905 and reached 2,889 in 1910–1911.⁷⁹ Due to its sectarian and dogmatic approach, the party abstained from recruiting members from “non-proletarian” social groups, especially from the intelligentsia (it was seen as a “great danger” to admit them to the movement), as well as from the peasants and the small proprietors in the towns. Party leaders continued to distrust the peasantry even after socialist propaganda had begun among the paupers and party organizations were created in the villages (these had no independent status and had to be associated with town organizations). In addition, the party consciously limited the influence it could exercise outside the movement by forbidding party officials and members to write for papers and journals that were critical of the SSDP.

The centralized organizational model, on the other hand, did not significantly help the party keep control of its members, who often violated the statute or ignored their duties towards the local organizations. As regards the mobilizing capacity of the SSDP, it has been estimated that in the movement’s heyday in 1911, a petition in favor of universal franchise attracted 22,000 signatures in eight months, while some 14,000 people

⁷⁷ Lapčević, *Istorija socijalizma u Srbiji*, 56.

⁷⁸ Bogdanović, “Serbia,” 430–432.

⁷⁹ Lapčević, *Istorija socijalizma u Srbiji*, 144–145.

participated in May Day processions in forty places. The party never had more than two (out of 160) seats in Parliament and did not try to ally with other parties, following the principle of class purity of the movement. It did not cooperate even with the Independent Radical Party, with which it shared certain political objectives.⁸⁰

According to Dubravka Stojanović, the SSDP was “the historical antithesis of the Serbian development,” but its modern political profile, which gave priority to Serbia’s economic development, collided with its political orthodoxy and with the authoritarian party hierarchy.⁸¹ Mira Bogdanović identifies several reasons why the Serbian Socialists and the Serbian labor movement were so marginal. First, the ideology of the SSDP did not adequately reflect the needs and demands of the Serbian handicraft “proletariat,” which was its main target group. Second, there was a large gap between the pre-industrial and pragmatic demands of an undeveloped “working class” and the idealistic expectations and personal ambitions of the socialist leaders. Third, there was a contrast between the fundamentally internationalist commitment of the Serbian Social Democrats and the strong nationalism in Serbian society. Fourth, there were problems with the socialist leaders’ image and reputation (such as their inclination to avoid an open competition for allocating posts in the movement, as well as their extreme animosity towards the Independent Radical Party). “In short, many words and few deeds.”⁸² This statement aptly describes the history of the Serbian Social Democrats.

Romanian Socialism under Question

The penetration of socialist ideas in the two Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia occurred in the usual manner, mediated by students who had studied abroad, but also by Russian immigrants. Because of the Romanian elite’s strong connections with France, socialist ideas were spread first by those who had received them in French milieus. After the revolution of 1848, socialism was disseminated by the workers’ and socialist press, while the first socialist intellectual and organizational circles were formed around some periodicals during the 1860s and 1870s.

The influx of radically-minded emigrants driven away from Russia (particularly Russian Bessarabia) by the imperial government gave a

⁸⁰ Bogdanović, “Serbia,” 432–435.

⁸¹ Stojanović, *Srpska socijaldemokratska partija*, 306.

⁸² Bogdanović, “Serbia,” 435–438.

new impetus to socialist propaganda. The socialist ideas spread by these emigrants were close to the Russian *narodnichestvo* imbued with certain anarchist tendencies but were also influenced by German socialism. They found their way into a number of publications, such as the prominent journal *Contemporanul* (Contemporary), published in Iași from 1881 to 1891. Printed propaganda and the involvement in legitimate political struggle gave the socialist movement in the country a modern appearance. A milestone in the debut of the movement was the publication of Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea's paper "What Do Romanian Socialists Want?" ("Ce vor socialiștii români?") in 1886 as well as the "Socialist Program" (*Programul socialist*). Based on an analysis of Romanian society, they argued for the need to create a Romanian socialist party.

The Romanian Social Democratic Workers' Party (*Partidul Social-Democrat al Muncitorilor din România*)⁸³ was founded in 1893, and its first general council included Ion Nădejde (1854–1928), who was elected party leader; Vasile Gh. Morțun (1860–1919); and others. The party program was inspired by the writings of Gherea and by the Erfurt Program of the German social democrats. It defined the role of the party as the representative of the Romanian proletariat and set the following goals: abolition of privileges, compulsory free education, elective magistracy, a progressive income tax, universal suffrage, preparation of labor legislation, radical reform of the agrarian system in favor of the peasants by purchasing state land and leasing it to farmers, provision of cheap loans and equipment for the rural economy, improving the sanitary conditions in villages, guaranteed freedom of assembly and right to strike, an eight-hour workday, Sundays off and old-age pensions, decentralization and communal autonomy, but also national unification and the making of an unitary nation-state. The party congresses were held annually and deliberated matters such as the need for universal suffrage and the party's electoral tactics, party propaganda in villages and towns organized through trade unions and clubs, the press and publishing activity of the party, the "Jewish Question" and the "[Northern] Dobrudja Question."

⁸³ For the history of the party, see *Istoria Românilor*, vol. 7, book 2, 163; Stelian Neagoe, *Cazul social-democrațiilor români* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului de științe politice și relații internaționale, 2005), 12–16; Aderca, C. *Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 28–41; Hitchins, *România*, 377–380; "Constituirea partidului politic al clasei muncitoare din România—P.S.D.M.R.," *Anale de istorie* 27, no. 1 (1981), 99–127; "Poziția partidului clasei muncitoare față de problemele fundamentale ale evoluției societății românești în a doua jumătate a secolului trecut," *Anale de istorie* 27, no. 3 (1981), 125–161; "Dezvoltarea Partidului clasei muncitoare din România în perioada 1893–1918," *Anale de istorie* 27, no. 5 (1981), 121–142.

Under the direct leadership of Gherea, Nădejde and Morțun, the Romanian Social Democratic Party adopted a moderate position abiding by the existing constitutional framework. This line of action ensued from the leaders' realization that due to the absence of an industrial proletariat—that is, of the class that was to produce socialists—a socialist transformation in Romania could only occur after such a transformation had taken place in the advanced European countries. Therefore, the party struggle at that stage was seen only as a preparation involving socialist propaganda, the organization and education of workers, efforts to improve their material and moral conditions, and making general democratic demands. The socialist leaders believed that Parliament was a more suitable arena for this kind of struggle than pressure from the street. However, in 1888–1899, socialist candidates won only a few seats in Parliament. Even before the party was established, its future leaders managed to create a temporary alliance with the National Liberal Party, seen as the more democratic of the two major Romanian parties (the other one was the Conservative Party). The Social Democratic Party included a group of socialists led by Anton Bacalbașa and Constantin Mille, who opposed this course, claimed to speak on behalf of the workers, stressed the importance of class struggle and insisted on organizing strikes, demonstrations and violence to achieve the goals of the party. However, this group remained a minority at the party's congresses.⁸⁴

Initially, the social basis of the socialist organizations was formed mostly from among the thin layer of educated socialists and by artisans who were reluctant to adopt the Marxist theoretical dogmas as filtered through Gherea's re-interpretation. The small-scale Romanian proletariat, mainly a first generation of poorly educated village recruits, conceived of the future revolution simply as a means of improving its own economic condition. At the same time, the socialist movement, which embraced the principles of internationalism, clashed with the bourgeois state and the traditional, nationally oriented cultural currents. The Liberal or Conservative governments saw the Socialists simply as a threat to the established state order.

Given the country's agrarian nature and following a decision of the party's Second Congress (in 1894), the young social democratic party tried to attract a peasant following by creating socialist clubs in villages.

⁸⁴ Dezvoltarea Partidului clasei muncitoare din România în perioada 1893–1918, 132, 134; Hitchins, *România*, 378–379.

The propaganda was conducted in the name of the constitution, and the rural clubs were even obliged to declare that they would “respect the laws and the authorities and will not heed those calling them to revolution.” The process of organizing the peasants gathered momentum in several southern counties along the Danube and even went beyond the control of the party representatives. The rural protest movements in some areas in 1899 provoked a severe response by the authorities—rural clubs were closed down, and socialist leaders were later arrested and persecuted.⁸⁵ These repressions, coupled with the weak effect of socialist propaganda in the cities and the prominence of the agrarian populism (*poporanism*) of Constantin Stere, discouraged the intellectuals among the party leaders, many of whom retreated from socialism.

The first symptom of the party's disintegration was the disagreement on the “Jewish Question”⁸⁶ of 1898. Specifically, there were anti-Semitic demands to restrict the admission of Jewish members to the economic structures of the party only (but not into the political ones). The growing confrontation between the representatives of the educated layers (the reformists) and those of the workers (the Marxists) was most clearly manifested during the last party congress in April 1899. Prior to the congress, Ioan Nădejde announced his resignation from the party due to a conflict with the Bucharest Workers' Club. During the congress a group of intellectual deputies proposed an alliance of all democratic forces and the creation of a new party that would work toward the democratization of the country as a condition for the emergence of a sustainable socialist party. A group of workers opposed the proposal and threatened to leave the congress. After prolonged discussions with the participation of Gherea, and despite his efforts to save the party, the two currents failed to reach an agreement. The congress was suspended and, having failed to elect a leadership, the party dissolved.

The words of Vasile Gh. Morțun, at whose house the congress was held, are indicative of the disruptive attitudes foreshadowing this outcome: “The national conditions of our country make socialism impossible today.

⁸⁵ *Istoria Românilor*, 99; Aderca, C. *Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 33–36.

⁸⁶ Anti-Semitism in Romania had religious and economic roots. The Jews, who were mostly emigrants from Russia and constituted a significant part of the urban population, were disenfranchised, as the Romanian Constitution of 1866 deprived non-Christians of the right to acquire Romanian citizenship. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin required the removal of this prohibition in order for Romania to gain independence. The Jews acquired the right to become Romanian citizens after a complex procedure, but most of them were deprived of the right to possess land, which was limited to Romanians by birth or naturalization.

PSDMR is just a germ, an embryo, and not something viable, because the natural conditions for accepting socialism are not created yet. Ours was a demagogic, not a democratic party, and we have been intoxicating ourselves with words and demands." The intellectuals among the party leaders, known as the "generous" (*generoși*), joined the left wing of the National Liberal Party. Their stated aim was to accelerate the implementation of agrarian and electoral reforms seen as necessary conditions for the future dissemination of socialist ideas. After the congress, those who were disappointed with the so-called "betrayal of the generous" (*trădarea generoșilor*) decided to continue their activity as socialists under the name Workers' Party (*Partidul muncitorilor*).⁸⁷

The consequent reconstruction of the socialist movement in Romania was based on the socialist theory and was carried out by working-class members. The task was undertaken by the Bucharest Workers' Club, which counted among its members Ion C. Frimu (1871–1919), Constantin Buzdugan and Christian Rakovski, and it began with the creation of the socialist circles, called "Worker's Romania" (*România Muncitoare*), in 1901. The process involved the unification of the Romanian trade-union movement (1906) and the subsequent unification of the socialist circles in a Socialist Union (*Uniunea Socialistă*) in 1907 with the purpose of defending the workers' rights by lawful means and of propagating the need for organizing a class party. Through Rakovski the Union joined the International Socialist Bureau in Brussels. The restrictive law of 1909 regulating the rights of assembly and strike of state and other officials (the so-called "villainous law") stimulated the socialists' transition from syndicalist to political action.

A congress for transforming the Socialist Union into the Romanian Social Democratic Party (PSDR) (*Partidul Social Democrat din România*) was held in early 1910 in Bucharest. It approved a program (actually the previous program, edited by a committee led by Gherea, was retained with a few additions) and statutes of the party. An executive committee was elected as a guiding body, with I.C. Frimu as its secretary. The congress justified the re-establishment of the party by pointing out the adverse policies of the national liberal government and the desire to make the struggle of the working class more coherent, while presenting the party itself as a "continuation" of the Socialist Union and of the original Social Democratic Party. Before Romania's entry into World War I, the PSDR

⁸⁷ Aderca, C. *Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 37–40; Hitchins, *România*, 380.

held three regular congresses and one extraordinary congress, at which changes to the party program were made. It also discussed and took decisions related to organizational structure, socialist propaganda among women, relations with other political parties, and electoral and agrarian reforms.⁸⁸

The leftist tendency within the Romanian socialist movement was represented by Christian Rakovski, a Romanian citizen of Bulgarian descent, and his followers.⁸⁹ This trend was fueled by the “betrayal of the generous” from the time of the party’s disintegration in 1899, and by the Romanian authorities’ unjustified repression of the socialists on the grounds of their alleged responsibility for the peasant uprising of 1907. As far as tactics were concerned, Rakovski considered parliamentary action to be merely a supplement to the primary tool of “political strike.” He also warned of the “danger” of revisionist socialism associated with Bernstein’s ideas. Between 1907 and 1912, Rakovski was exiled from Romania, and the question of his return became a key concern for the Romanian socialists. After his return he played a leading role in defining the party’s antiwar position.

As in Serbia, the socialist movement in Romania had a modest presence in political and social life before World War I. According to Keith Hitchins, the socialists’ main weakness was rooted in the strength of tradition. In predominantly agrarian Romania, the vast majority of the population did not even accept capitalism as a model of development and accordingly perceived socialism (as far as it understood the term) as still more harmful and unsuitable to the local conditions. Given the absence of a strong working class in the country, the relationship between the socialists and the peasants caused the failure of socialism.

Gherea recognized the importance of agriculture and saw the peasants as agents of capitalist change in the agrarian relations, yet he tended to ignore them. He treated peasant violence and the peasant movement in general as futile and outside the main current of social change. These ambivalent views influenced the socialist policy toward the peasantry. The Romanian socialists paid attention to the agrarian question and tried to extend the influence of socialism to the rural areas, but any success was

⁸⁸ Neagoe, *Cazul social-democraților români*, 16–21; Hitchins, *România*, 380–382.

⁸⁹ For Rakovski’s role in the Romanian socialist movement, see, for example, *Rakovski, dosar secret*, ed., Stelian Tănase (Iași: Polirom, 2007); Petrana Atanasova, “Krăstyo Rakovski i rumănskoto rabotnichesko dvizhenie,” *Izvestiya na Instituta za istoriya na BKP* 64 (Sofia, 1989), 183–198.

only temporary. These activities sometimes confused the peasants. The socialists demanded an end to “neo-serfdom” and for land to be expropriated from large estates and given to the peasants. At the same time, they urged peasants to accept the inevitability of the capitalist economic system as a necessary prelude to socialism and wanted large properties to be maintained as an integral feature of capitalism. In addition, the socialists questioned the political capacity of the peasants and denied the need for a peasant political party, which in Romania was not created until 1918. The Romanian peasants associated socialism with collective property and atheism, which threatened their sense of community. The peasants’ attachment to tradition and Orthodoxy also accounted for their lack of enthusiasm for socialist propaganda.⁹⁰

The socialists’ aspiration for an accelerated development of capitalism and its replacement with socialism could not have a considerable impact upon a society that still had not broken with the semi-feudal agrarian regime and had not fully accepted the principles of capitalism. Hence Romanian socialism had only a weak influence on society, support for it in the towns and villages was lacking, and the movement suffered internal contradictions and organizational collapse.

Bifurcation in Bulgarian Socialism

Leftist political ideas reached Bulgaria in the 1880s, mainly from Russia as well as from Western Europe, where many Bulgarian students took their education. These ideas intermingled with the revolutionary legacy of the Bulgarian national movement in the Ottoman Empire. Marxist propaganda in Bulgaria appeared in the late 1880s, through the journal *Săvremennij pokazatel* (Contemporary Index), edited by Dimităr Blagoev; the socialist newspaper *Rositsa* (Dew), published in Gabrovo by Evtim Dabev (1864–1946); and a network of educational societies under the generic name *Nov zhivot* (New Life), set up by Nikola Gabrovski (1864–1925), who also participated in the inauguration of the Congress of the Second International in Paris in 1889.⁹¹

In the early 1890s the various versions of Marxism and the debates over their application in Bulgaria were focused on two main theoretical concepts exemplified in two programs for the organization and activity of Bulgarian socialists. The first concept (and program) was that of

⁹⁰ Hitchins, *România*, 382–384, 391–392.

⁹¹ Damianova, “Bulgaria,” 402–403.

the "Unionists," as they were later called, who represented the Bulgarian socialist student group in Geneva around Slavi Balabanov and the aforementioned Krăstyo (Christian) Rakovski and included some of the country's socialists, such as Sava Mutafov (1864–1943), Evtim Dabev and Konstantin Bozveliev (1862–1951). The second concept (program) was that of the "Partists," centered around Dimităr Blagoev and Nikola Gabrovski.

Both programs were ideologically based on Marxism and indicated the need for the establishment of a political party. However, they differed in their views of the development of capitalism in Bulgaria and the socialists' concrete tactics and tasks. According to the first program, the process of capitalist development in Bulgaria was still in its infancy, and the working class was weak and disorganized. Therefore, the Bulgarian socialists had to concentrate their efforts primarily on the organization of the workers, the creation of trade unions and socialist propaganda, and only after having established a secure social basis were they to undertake political action. According to the second program Bulgaria was already completely under the sway of capitalism. Therefore, the socialists had to proceed immediately with the creation of a socialist party, which had to raise economic and political demands. While the "Unionists" tried to adjust their goals to the specific conditions in Bulgaria, the "Partists" adhered strictly to Marxist theory and the socialist tactics of the industrialized European countries.

At a meeting of several socialist associations held in July–August 1891, the creation of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party (BSDP) (*Bălgarska sotsialdemokraticheska partiya*), the first party of its kind in the Balkans, was announced, thus rallying the support of the majority of the delegates for Blagoev's and Gabrovski's "Partist" project. The first version of the party program was influenced by the programs of the French and the Belgian socialist parties. It did not mention class struggle, social revolution and proletarian dictatorship, but a "gradual conquest of state power" and "legal means" for implementing the program. The request to decentralize the state and transform it into a federal union of productive communities, influenced by the French program, was also included. The chief target group of the party was the wage earners; its ultimate goal was nationalization of the means of production; its principal task was to foster class consciousness among the workers, to organize them into a separate social class striving for a socialist transformation and to put the socialist precepts into practice in Bulgaria. The party's minimum program included full political rights, guarantees of civic rights, extensive self-government in municipalities and counties, free education and social protection of

the economically disadvantaged classes.⁹² The party program gave the impression of a breach between revolutionary theory, concentrating on the proletariat as the chief target group, and practical demands concerning larger segments of the population. The program was later revised and finally adopted in 1893. As in Serbia and Romania, it drew heavily on the Erfurt program of the German Social Democratic Party of 1891. The changes reinforced the Marxist propositions by including among the ultimate goals the “abolition of class rule and social classes,” dropping the request for the country’s decentralization and federalization, and stressing the importance of the political struggle of the working class.⁹³

In 1892 the opponents of the BSDP formed the Bulgarian Social Democratic Union (BSDU) (*Bălgarski sotsialdemokratičeski sąyuz*) headed by Sava Balabanov, Krăstyo Rakovski, Sava Mutafov, Konstantin Bozveliev and Yanko Sakăzov. They continued to assert their belief that political struggle must be a consequence of the struggle for the economic interests of workers.

The gradual recognition of the equal importance of economic and political struggles (in line with the recommendation of the Second International), the fragmentation of the socialist forces and the persecution of socialists undertaken by the heavy-handed regime of Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov (1887–1894) pushed the socialists in the direction of unification. As a result of negotiations and compromises, in 1894 the “Unionists” and the “Partists” merged into the Bulgarian Social Democratic Labor Party (BSDLP) (*Bălgarska rabotničeska sotsialdemokratičeska partiya*). Its program was identical with the one the Social Democratic Party adopted in 1893. Initially, the party represented a federation of local socialist groups, workers’ societies and student socialist groups. In 1900, 1,761 members were registered, of whom 496 were workers. According to data for 1901–1902, one-third of the party members were workers; another

⁹² *Bălgarska komunističeska partiya. Dokumenti na tsentralnite răkovodni organi*, vol. 1 (Sofia: Institut po istoriya na BKP, 1972), 26–31.

⁹³ Damianova, Bulgaria, 403–405. For the beginning of socialism in Bulgaria, see also Joseph Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria: Origins and Development, 1883–1936* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 1–17; John Bell, *The Bulgarian Communist Party from Blagoev to Zhivkov* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Hoover Institution Press, 1986); Veselin Yanchev, “Apologiya na bălgarskata sotsialdemokratsia (1891–1944),” in *Izsledvaniya po istoriya na sotsializma v Bălgariya*, vol. 1, 1891–1944 (Sofia: Grafimaks, 2008), 142–154; *Istoriya na Bălgariya*, vol. 7, 1878–1903, 279–307; *Istoriya na Bălgarskata komunističeska partiya*, 4th expanded edition (Sofia: Partizdat, 1984), 40–57.

third were independent owners; and the rest were teachers, state officials, and the like.⁹⁴

The BSDLP pursued its objectives through legitimate political activity. The party's electoral tactic oscillated between pragmatism (focusing on demands which appealed not only to the workers but also to peasants and small producers) and an ideological approach (by criticizing the status quo, advocating the ultimate goals of socialism and concentrating solely on workers). The first electoral successes were achieved in rural areas, owing to participation in joint electoral lists that raised common democratic demands. In 1897, however, the socialists took a decision, confirmed in 1900, not to co-operate with other parties or with persons during elections. The party won two seats in each of the 1894 and 1896 parliamentary elections, six seats in 1899, one seat in 1901 and eight seats in 1902. Hesitation between the two electoral tactics was also evident in the behavior of the socialist deputies in the National Assembly.⁹⁵

The ideological controversies among the Bulgarian socialists concerned the questions of tactics, the identity of the party and the strategic goals of the movement. The group led by Dimităr Blagoev called the "Narrow Socialists" insisted that the party's activity was limited to defending the interests of the wage earners, thus narrowing down its social target group. The "Narrows" stood for a policy that would prepare the Bulgarian workers for the social revolution to come. The other group, formed in 1900 around Yanko Sakāzov and called the "Broad Socialists," believed instead that the party should have a wider social basis and should seek to attract a larger proportion of small owners in both villages and towns. According to the political program developed in Sakāzov's journal *Obshto delo* (Common Cause), there was no independent political force in Bulgaria capable of establishing democracy in the country. For that reason, it was necessary for all productive classes, peasants, artisans, traders and workers, as well as bourgeois democratic groups and intellectuals, to unite their forces. This controversy caused a schism within the party, which was confirmed at the congress in 1903. From then on the country had two socialist parties, the BSDLP (Narrow Socialists) and the BSDLP (Broad Socialists).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Damianova, "Bulgaria," 405.

⁹⁵ Yanchev, *Apologiya na bālgarskata sotsialdemokratsiya*, 156–158. See also Dobrinka Parusheva, "Activité et tactique parlementaires des social-démocraties balkaniques jusqu'en 1912," *Études balkaniques*, 1991, no. 2, 25–39.

⁹⁶ *Istoriya na Bālgaria*, vol. 7, 364–378; *Istoriya na Bālgarskata komunisticheska partiya*, 48–88.

At their first separate congress the Broad Socialists condemned the split and outlined the principles of their party. It was defined as a party of the class-conscious proletariat and of social development, whose ideology was scientific socialism and whose base was the workers and those socially close to them. This was a party not just of the future but also of the present, not just of revolution but of reform. Its tactics adhered to the principles of class struggle, but at the same time permitted temporary alliances and agreements with bourgeois parties at crucial times for the country.⁹⁷

Another dissident grouping emerged within the Narrow Socialists' party in 1905. Led by intellectuals such as Nikola Sakarov (1881–1943) and Georgi Bakalov, this grouping opposed the centralization of the party and argued for more freedom in the socialist press and for effective trade-union action. Blagoev denounced these intellectuals as “anarcho-liberals,” and they were expelled from the Narrows' party to re-emerge, in 1906, in a new organization—the Social Democratic Union “Proletarian” (*Sotsialdemokratičeski sŭyuz “Proletarij”*). In 1909 they joined the Broad Socialists.⁹⁸

After 1891 the Bulgarian Social Democrats included some peasant demands in their agenda but never developed a specific agrarian program. This resistance was motivated by theoretically based objections and a mistrust of the peasants: they were seen as a conservative stratum doomed to disappear or, at best, to become proletarians. Nevertheless, as Dimităr Blagoev himself observed, the growth of the party “did not spring from the big workers' centers, but mainly from the small artisan cities, and predominantly from the growth of purely peasant local party organizations [...]”⁹⁹ The socialists had greater influence in villages than in cities (also observed in Serbia) not because of the peasants' support for Marxist ideology but because of the peasants' hope that the minimum socialist program (that is, the common democratic demands) created the possibility of making their lives easier within the existing social order.¹⁰⁰

Despite the lack of a special agrarian platform, some socialists argued that the peasants had a role to play in the socialist project. Nikola Gabrovski believed that socialism would evolve not only from the working class, as

⁹⁷ See Klara Pinkas, *Reformistkata sotsialdemokratiya v Bălgariya: Ideologiya, politika, organizatsiya, 1903–1917* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1981).

⁹⁸ See Yordan Yotov, *Tsentrizmăt v bălgarskoto sotsialistichsko dvizhenie, 1905–1929* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BKP, 1969).

⁹⁹ Blagoev, *Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsialisma v Bălgariya*, 352–353.

¹⁰⁰ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 210–211.

Marx and Engels had argued, but from all “impoverished” and disgruntled people. He thought the socialist party should put pressure on the state institutions to carry out reforms, introduce modern agricultural techniques and create co-operatives benefiting the peasants. Later Gabrovski castigated the “old parties” for failing to develop an effective agrarian program and especially for the disproportionate taxation imposed on the peasantry. He also pointed out that the socialists “can achieve what cannot be achieved by the old parties.” His views on the agrarian problem combined some aspects of populism with the evolutionist scheme of social democracy. They provoked a discussion about the party’s stance towards the non-proletarian strata. Gabrovski, who participated in several congresses of the Second International, was, along with the Romanian Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a champion of an agrarian program for the socialist movement. Furthermore, in Parliament he came up with a practical agenda to ease the hardships of the peasantry.¹⁰¹

The peasant movement and the creation of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (*Bălgarski zemedelski naroden sąyuz*) at the turn of the twentieth century provoked a crisis in the socialist party coinciding with the emergence of Sakăzov’s theory of “common cause.” The ideological and other connections between the early Agrarians and the Socialists¹⁰² did not change the latter’s disdain for the peasants. The resolution on the party’s relationship with the peasant movement, adopted at the party congress of 1900, emphasized the unclear and non-revolutionary character of the incipient peasant movement, advising party members to be extremely cautious in dealing with it. Nevertheless, the opinions expressed at the congress varied.¹⁰³

After the split of 1903, the Narrow Socialists retained their distrust of the peasantry as a whole, though they tried to integrate the agricultural workers. A new provision for “equating agricultural workers and servants with the industrial workers” was added to the party program adopted at the congress of 1904, which generally preserved the program of 1894.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 211–215; Yanchev, *Apologiya na bălgarskata sotsialdemokratsia*, 147, 158–160.

¹⁰² Both movements were initially indebted to populism; both recruited their intellectuals mainly from the group of the teachers; some Agrarians had a socialist “biography,” such as Tsanko Tserkovski (1869–1926), who was expelled from the Social Democratic Party in 1901 for having dual membership.

¹⁰³ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 221–223; *Istoriya na Bălgarskata komunisticheska partiya*, 74; Blagoev, *Prinos kăm istoriyata na sotsializma v Bălgariya*, 368–370.

¹⁰⁴ *BKP v rezolyutsii i resheniya na kongresite, konferentsiite i plenumite na TsK* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BKP, 1957), 63–67.

The parliamentary activities of the two socialist parties after the split reflected the tactical differences between them. While the Narrow Socialists pursued a "revolutionary" strategy and refused any cooperation with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties, the Broad Socialists pursued a strategy of electoral coalitions raising both general democratic and workers' demands. Despite the increase in votes cast for both parties, between 1903 and 1911 they won no seats in Parliament. In early 1907 the Broad Socialists became part of a wide patriotic bloc directed against the policy of the monarch and the government, but in May of the same year they withdrew from it. In the elections for the Grand National Assembly of 1911, the Broad Socialist party reached an agreement with the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union at the local level and won five mandates (for the first time since 1903). After partial elections in Sofia in 1912, Sakǎzov was elected deputy to the National Assembly. The parliamentary representation of the two parties increased after the Balkan Wars, capitalizing on the growing discontent with the government's policy. The Broads won nineteen seats, and the Narrows eighteen seats, in the 1913 elections; in the 1914 elections the numbers were ten and eleven, respectively.¹⁰⁵

Until the end of World War I, the Bulgarian socialists did not participate in the central government. Sakǎzov refused Tsar Ferdinand's invitation to participate in a coalition government after Bulgaria's defeat in the Second Balkan War in 1913. Yet, along with two other members of his party, he became minister in the coalition cabinets that governed the country immediately after the end of World War I, in 1918–1919.

Socialist activity in Bulgaria was most conspicuous in the field of propaganda and the education of workers. Compared to other Balkan socialists, the Bulgarians were far more active in translating and publishing foreign and domestic socialist literature. Between 1880 and 1914, 1,151 such books and pamphlets were published in Bulgaria, compared to 675 in Serbia and 198 in Romania.¹⁰⁶

The existence of two socialist parties with identical names and almost identical programs was unprecedented in the Second International. In compliance with the resolution of its Amsterdam Congress of 1904, the

¹⁰⁵ The increased influence of the socialists of both parties before, during and after the wars was also reflected in their improved performance in the local elections and the winning of town councils ("communes"), especially by the Narrows (in Samokov in 1910, and in Sliven in 1912). See Damianova, "Bulgaria," 414–416.

¹⁰⁶ The foreign authors translated and published in Bulgarian from the beginning of the twentieth century were Kautsky (with 40 titles), Plekhanov (36), Marx (32), Engels (21), Lafargue (20), Jaurès (10), Parvus (6) and Guesde (5). See Damianova, "Bulgaria," 417–418.

International Socialist Bureau made several attempts to reconcile the two parties in 1909–1910. The attempts failed mainly because of the intransigence of the Narrow Socialists. Krăstyo Rakovski's "unifying mission" of 1911 had the same fate.

As in Serbia and Romania, the two socialist parties had only limited influence in Bulgarian society, and the majority of the wage-earning population remained outside the organized socialist movement. In 1910 the two parties had a total of 5,016 members, which was only a small fraction of the workers. More than half of the party's members were young, unmarried and aged between twenty and thirty. While the Narrow Socialists pursued the idea of a genuine working-class party (68 percent of its members in 1910 were workers), the Broad Socialist party grew mainly from the support of artisans, employees and the liberal professions (workers were only 35 percent of its membership in 1910). The number of agricultural workers in both parties was limited. This can be explained by the predominantly peasant mentality of the agricultural workers, the presence of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union as a more appealing alternative after 1899 and the lack of interest in socialism among the agricultural workers.¹⁰⁷

* * *

The social democratic parties in the agrarian Balkans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century remained weak and marginal political formations. Ideological dogmatism dominated the parties of the Bulgarian Narrows and the Serbian social democrats. In contrast to the political self-isolation of the orthodox Marxists, the early Romanian socialists and the Bulgarian reformists, the Broads collaborated occasionally with other political parties.

Internal contradictions and organizational squabbles further weakened the socialist movements. The internal divisions into "leftists" and "rightists," revolutionaries and reformists accompanied the development of all social democratic parties, often leading to resignations, exclusions and splits. These tendencies were relatively weak in Serbia, quite specific in Romania and most dramatic in Bulgaria.

Due to the strong influence of the Radical Party, which had monopolized the legacy of early socialism in Serbia, and to the authoritarian royal regime, the Serbian Social Democratic Party was the last to appear on the political stage (in 1903). This probably explains why it generally managed

¹⁰⁷ Damianova, "Bulgaria," 407–409.

to maintain its unity despite its orthodox Marxist stance. After a brief confrontation, the socialist intellectuals with reformist leanings left and joined the Independent Radical Party, which in ideological terms was closest to the social democrats. Following this secession, the radical left wing in the party remained undisturbed by further dissent.

The Romanian Social Democrats themselves effectively dissolved their party (in 1899) after six years of existence; almost the entire party leadership joined the National Liberal Party. The reasons for this decision were the disappointing response from the urban proletariat, the failure to attract the peasants, and the inability to compete with the new agrarian-populist ideas (*poporanism*). A slow restoration process followed, which ended in 1910. If the early reformist trend led to the disbanding of the first party, the reformist debates in Marxism had almost no impact on the Romanian Social Democrats, as they were overshadowed by the debates between Marxists and agrarian populists around the lingering and very painful agrarian question.

The identitarian controversy gave rise to a deep organizational split in the party of the Bulgarian social democrats. The controversy reflected the different views regarding the place and mission of social democracy in predominantly agrarian Bulgaria. On the one hand, the controversy was connected with and echoed the ongoing debate in the international socialist movement caused by revisionism. On the other hand, it was prompted by the political situation in the country (including an anti-democratic government, violations of the constitution and peasant riots). Some of the grounds for the confrontation between the Narrow and the Broad Socialists disappeared with the fall of the cabinet, which had suppressed the peasant unrest, and as the Broad Socialists gradually abandoned the idea of "common cause." Yet the two currents did not merge, mainly because of a lack of political will for an agreement, especially from the Narrow Socialists and their leader, Blagoev. The appearance of an organized agrarian movement reduced the prospects for sowing socialist ideas among agricultural workers. The visibility and attraction of the two parties increased after the two Balkan wars and during World War I, due to their antiwar and anti-imperialist stand.¹⁰⁸

The few representatives whom the social democratic parties managed to send to Parliament behaved in a strongly oppositional manner

¹⁰⁸ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 283–285.

by promoting socialist ideas yet focusing on their “minimum programs.” The Serbian deputies were concerned primarily with the actual position of the small working class and its improvement; the Romanian and Bulgarian deputies concentrated on general democratic demands such as the solution of the agrarian question and the democratization of the electoral system in Romania and respect for the constitutional norms in Bulgaria.¹⁰⁹

Given the agrarian environment in which the Balkan socialists promoted their ideas, their social impact cannot be compared to that of the large socialist parties in the industrialized countries. On a regional scale the impact of socialism in Bulgaria seems stronger and more stable than in Serbia and Romania. Zhivka Damyanova believes the explanation lies in the “more realistic priorities” of the socialists in Bulgaria and in Blagoev’s understanding that the social transformations in the country would be a consequence of the revolution in the advanced capitalist countries in Europe.¹¹⁰

In organizational terms the division between revolutionaries and reformists was also clearest in Bulgaria. The data shows that each of the two socialist parties in the country had a share of influence among the working class and in society. With this in mind, an alternative explanation for the stronger influence of Bulgarian socialism is also possible. At first glance it may appear that the split in the socialist movement entailed a loss of the accumulated “capital” of social and political protests and limited the opportunities of both parties to exert a bigger social impact. In fact, however, the split created opportunities to propagate more distinct political programs that could attract a wider range of supporters. At the same time, the ensuing rivalry between the two parties stimulated them to intensify their public activity.

An assessment of the revolutionary and the reformist currents suggests that the “broader” understanding of socialism practiced by the reformists was better tailored to the social situation in the Balkan countries. In the longer run, however, the revolutionaries’ dogmatism would become the basis for the communist alternative born after World War I, which would dominate in the three countries after World War II. The fall of the communist regimes in 1989 and the failed Marxist vision of the future vindicated again the reformist line of political action.

¹⁰⁹ Parusheva, *Activité et tactique parlementaires des social-démocraties*, 38–39.

¹¹⁰ Damyanova, “Bulgaria,” 419.

The organizational contacts between the Balkan socialists were shaped by socialism's professed international nature as an ideology and movement. The socialist periodicals regularly published materials on the course of the movement in other countries and on the socialist parties abroad. At times their newspapers, journals and books were used, or writings by prominent socialists from neighboring countries were translated. One form of contact between the Balkan socialists that became more common after the early twentieth century was the occasional exchange of representatives at party and trade-union congresses. The congresses of the Second International were another venue for encounters and cooperation among the Balkan socialists. Instances of regional cooperation, however, were not particularly common until Balkan socialist conferences were held in Belgrade (in 1910) and Bucharest (in 1915). A prominent figure in the relations between the Bulgarian and the Romanian socialists in particular was Krăstyo (Christian) Rakovski, who participated consecutively in both socialist movements and became a leading figure of Romanian social democracy.

After the split of the Social Democratic Party in Bulgaria in 1903, the conflict between the Narrow and the Broad Socialists largely determined the relations between the Balkan socialists. The Romanian and the Serbian socialists' position on the division in the Bulgarian socialist movement changed from initial support of the Narrows and condemnation of "opportunism" to embracing the call for unification raised by Rakovski or the neutral position of the Serbian socialists. This change occurred under the influence of the centrist positions of the Second International urging organizational unification of the socialist movements and via the existing personal connections and relationships.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Due to Georgi Bakalov's close ties with the Serbian socialist movement, the conflict between the "anarcho-liberals" and the Narrow Socialists accelerated the change in the position of the Serbian socialists. For the relations between the Balkan socialists, see *Vrăzki i vzaimootnosheniya mezhdru bălgarskite i srăbskite sotsialisti do 1917 g.* (Sofia: Bălgarski komitet za balkansko razbiratelstvo i sătudnichestvo, 1989); Atanasova, Dokumenti i materiali za vrăzkite, 473–487; Petko Boev, "Dimităr Blagoev i sătudnichestvoto mezhdru proletarskite partii na Balkanite," in *Dimităr Blagoev—belezhit teoretik i revolyutsioner*, 287–318; *Solidaritatea mișcării muncitorești și democratice din România și mișcarea muncitorească și democratică din Bulgaria* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1974); Elena Atanasova, *Vrăzki i vzaimootnosheniya mezhdru bălgarskite i srăbskite sotsialisti (1895–1919)* (Sofia: BAN, 1968); Vasile Hristu, "Dobrogeanu-Gherea i bălgarite," *Istorieski pregled*, 1947–1948, no. 1, 81–90.

3. TRADE UNIONS AND PARTIES

By the end of the nineteenth century, most European socialists had accepted the necessity for both syndicalist and political organizations of the proletariat. Trade unions were seen as necessary in order to organize the workers to protect their rights, to resist the exploitation of labor by strikes and to block the capitalist economic system. The role of the revolutionary parties as they saw it was to ensure the unity of political doctrine, exercise pressure on the bourgeois parties and prepare political activists for the realization of the revolution and the overthrow of the bourgeois elites. The disputes boiled down to the relationship between trade unions and parties. Although the Second International in 1893 prioritized political rather than trade-unionist action in the preparation of the revolution, the nature of this relationship differed greatly from country to country. Germany, Great Britain and France, for example, presented three different patterns of this relationship, which can provisionally be called party predominance in Germany, trade-union predominance in Great Britain and "parity" in France.

In Germany the Social Democratic Party, founded in 1875, established itself as a mass party, the first of its kind in Europe. The union movement in the country emerged in 1868 but failed to emancipate itself from the party, which was created later. Since the 1880s the "free trade unions" were dominated by the Social Democratic Party despite their claims of being independent. The situation in Great Britain was quite different: the syndicalism developed much earlier than the political movement and gained more influence. It started in the eighteenth century and got all the way to establishing a national confederation—the Trade Unions' Congress in 1868—which was recognized by the authorities three years later. The establishment of the Labour Party occurred as late as 1900–1906 and was partly influenced by the trade unions. The first trade unions in France appeared after the recognition of the right to protest in 1864, and the movement grew after the legalization of union activities in 1884. At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, the most intense debates and struggles around the relationship between syndicalism and political socialism erupted precisely in France. While the dominant "revolutionary syndicalism," which was influenced by anarchism, opposed alliances with the political movement, the Marxists sought to affiliate the trade unions to the party. Eventually, in 1906 the principle of independence of the union movement was confirmed (by the Charter of Amiens). The headquarters of the union movement, founded

in 1895, and the first United Socialist Party of France (the French Section of the Workers' International), created in 1905, forged a relationship of equals, without one or the other dominating.¹¹²

Toward a "Party" Model in Serbia

The first (mostly) spontaneous strikes and demonstrations in the major Serbian towns, which raised economic demands, took place in the 1870s and 1880s. The labor movement progressed in the 1890s, but the first labor organizations united mainly handicraft workers. In 1892 a Craftsmen Workers' Union was created, attracting the socialists of the time. The prevailing type of organization until the early twentieth century was local societies for the mutual assistance and education of their members, as well as a number of trade unions concentrated mainly in Belgrade.

The merging of the labor organizations was initiated by the socialists and occurred almost simultaneously with the formation of the Social Democratic Party after the fall of King Alexander I Obrenović's regime. The first congress of the Serbian workers' organizations in May 1903 established a loose federation, named the General Workers' Union (*Glavni radnički savez*). Initially, it brought together all workers' organizations—such as trade unions and societies for mutual assistance and enlightenment—and had both economic and political goals. Between 1903 and 1905, its founders, the socialists Milorad Popović (1875–1905) and Kosta Jovanović (1875–1930), considered their primary tasks to be trade-union organization and consolidation, supplemented by the propagation of socialist ideas and the raising of class consciousness. They thought that the subdivision of the movement into economic and political branches was premature. In 1904–1905 younger socialists such as Radovan Dragović (1878–1905), Dimitrije Tucović (1881–1914) and others asserted that the labor movement in Serbia was already capable of adopting the German organizational model. This current prevailed. In 1905 the General Workers' Union was declared the representative of the trade-union movement, aiming to lead the class struggle and to defend the class interests of workers in Serbia.

Following the proposal by Dimitrije Tucović, who headed the socialist party after 1908, the party congress of 1910 approved the creation of a unified center to lead the class struggle in its union through parliamentary and other forms. The decision was also approved by the General Workers'

¹¹² Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice*, 526–528; Elley, *Forging Democracy*, 69–79.

Union. A head office, connecting the socialist party with the trade unions, and the Workers Chamber (*Radnička komora*), defending the interests of workers in their disputes with employers, were established as a result.

The two branches of the movement—the economic and the political—developed under the umbrella of the socialist party, which, despite some declarations of parallel development, in practice began to dominate the trade unions. The orthodox socialists led both the party and the General Workers' Union. Nevertheless, the Serbian workers looked to the trade unions and economic protests to improve their situation rather than to the party and its political goals.

Between 1907 and 1912, a total of 275 strikes were held in Serbia, prompting legislative changes in favor of the workers. In 1910 the Serbian Parliament passed a law that limited the workday to ten hours, established workers' labor standards and recognized the right to protest.¹¹³

Toward a "Parity" Model in Romania

The early professional workers' organizations in Romania, dating from the 1850s, were associations for mutual aid that included both workers and employers. The new workers' associations in the 1870s continued this activity, but they also attempted to improve working conditions. The first organization created solely by workers and excluding employers was the *Deșteptarea* ("Awakening"), which appeared after the 1879 withdrawal of a number of typographical workers from the General Association of All Workers of Romania (*Asociația Generală a tuturor lucrătorilor în România*), founded in 1872.

Starting in the late 1880s, the workers' organizations and the socialist circles drew closer. A number of trade unions formally affiliated with the workers' clubs and the socialists intensified their propaganda for militant unions based on the principle of class struggle. The working-class movement progressed after the creation of the socialist party in 1893, and despite its dissolution in 1899 and the economic crisis of 1899–1903. By 1906 the number of trade unions in Romania had reached 345. The efforts towards greater coordination in the movement culminated in the founding of the General Commission of Trade Unions (*Comisia Generală a Sindicatelor*) the same year. Along with the activities of the working-class movement, this organization strengthened the links between the socialists

¹¹³ Bogdanović, *Serbia*, 426–429; Mira Bogdanović, *Srpski radnički pokret, 1903–1914: naličje legende* (Zagreb: Globus, 1989).

and the workers. The Commission's five-member board included socialist leaders Alexandru Constantinescu and Ioan C. Frimu.

The debates between socialist and trade-union leaders in Romania concerned the place of "the intellectual" in the working-class movement and the institutional relationship between the two movements. The *narodnik* view that "the intellectual," a term often used as a synonym for a socialist, had a moral responsibility to help the working masses improve their material and moral life was widespread in the 1870s and 1880s. This view gave way to the notion that the intellectual's function was to get the working-class movement underway and then withdraw from the movement. Gherea, however, thought the intellectuals should have a permanent and critical place in the organization and leadership of the working-class movement. In 1892 he argued that, in an underdeveloped country and in the absence of a bourgeoisie, the intellectuals had a special responsibility to open people's minds to the infinite possibilities of development.¹¹⁴

After the party crisis of 1899, the new socialist leaders changed their stance on the place of intellectuals in the working-class movement. In 1906 Christian Rakovski observed that Romanian socialism's great weakness before 1899 had been the gap between the workers and the intellectuals, who dominated the movement. He promised that now the intellectuals had not come to impose their "particular psychology" upon the working-class movement, but rather to lend it a hand as simple foot-soldiers.¹¹⁵

As for the institutional relationships between socialists and trade unionists, the concept of an independent trade-union movement prevailed in Romania from the early twentieth century until after World War I. The socialist conference of 1907 decided that the activities of the trade unions should be separated from those of the socialist circles in order to avoid the harmful "confusion" of the past. Rakovski later explained that the trade unions had to be "open-minded" toward the workers' diverse social and political ideas and that they had to have the characteristics of a working-class organization.¹¹⁶ The 1910 congress of trade unions adopted a resolution stating that the unions were concerned with the economic struggle of the workers and the socialists with the political struggle; it concluded that

¹¹⁴ Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Opere complete*, vol. 2, 434–435, 440–446 ("Rolul păturii culte în transformările sociale").

¹¹⁵ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1900–1909* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1975), 407.

¹¹⁶ Cristian Racovski, *Scrieri social-politice (1900–1916)* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1977), 132–134 ("Programul și statutele mișcării socialiste").

the best interests of the working class required their cooperation.¹¹⁷ In his 1913 articles, Rakovski assigned to the trade unions the task of improving the working and living conditions of the proletariat, while the main function of the Social Democratic Party was the organization of the social revolution.

The number of trade-union members reached 8,500 in 1909 but fell to 4,000 the following year due to a law forbidding unions in state-run enterprises such as the railroads. Successful strikes, social legislation in favor of workers, and the campaigns of the Social Democratic Party and the trade unions caused union membership to grow, peaking at 9,700 in 1912.

The trade-union campaigns helped get several major labor laws passed by Parliament. The laws regulated the conditions of women and child labor (1906), regulated safety in the manufacturing and the processing industry, guaranteed Sunday rest and other holidays during the year (1910) and provided social insurance for workers—in case of illness, accident, old age and disability pensions (1912).¹¹⁸

Divided Parties—Divided Trade Unions in Bulgaria

The economic organization of the workers in Bulgaria followed their political organization. The first trade unions were created after 1899 and brought together printers, carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors, shoemakers and tram workers. The formation and development of the trade unions took place with the direct participation and influence of the socialists. The schism in the Bulgarian socialist movement was also reflected in the trade-union movement. The revolutionary and reformist approaches to the trade unions further divided the Narrow and the Broad Socialists.

In 1904 the congresses of the two socialist parties created two national trade unions—the General Worker Trade Union Federation/GWTUF (*Obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen sąyuz*) under the leadership of the Narrow Socialists, and the Free Trade Union Federation/FTUF (*Svoboden sindikalen sąyuz*) under the leadership of the Broad Socialists. According to the Narrows' concept, the socialist party and the trade unions were "two organizations differing in form and essence but similar in respect to their final goal," and it was the party's duty to provide ideological leadership.

¹¹⁷ *Documente din istoria mișcării muncitorești din România, 1910–1905* (Bucharest: Editura politică, 1968), 100–101.

¹¹⁸ See Hitchins, *România*, 384–388; Floarea Dragne and Ion Iacoș, *Mișcarea sindicală din România* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1981).

Their trade union was built as a centralized organization, subordinated in practice to the party. The leaders of the Narrow Socialists categorically rejected the idea of trade-union neutrality and “reconciliation courts” for employers and workers recommended by their opponents, the Broad Socialists. The Narrows characterized these ideas as “petty bourgeois policy” aimed against the “unity of the common proletarian struggle.” Their interpretation of the international experience was along the same lines, and they argued that the neutrality of the British trade unions was “of use to the bourgeois parties only.”¹¹⁹

The Broad Socialists had been advocating trade-union neutrality for a while, but after 1907 they found this reasoning no longer relevant. At that time both Bulgarian socialist parties voted for the resolution of the Second International’s congress in Stuttgart calling for “close relations” between the socialist parties and the unions. In practice, the Broad party controlled the Free Trade Union Federation. But because they had less interest in organizational matters, they did not control their union as much as the Narrow Socialists controlled theirs.¹²⁰

Under the influence of the socialist congress in Stuttgart, the FTUF leadership proposed the unification of all trade unions in the country. The Narrow Socialists rejected the proposition, but in 1908 an association of the trade unions of the Broad Socialists and the Social Democratic Union “Proletarian” was actually achieved by the establishment of the United General Trade Union Federation/UGTUF (*Obedinen obsht rabotnicheski sŭyuz*).

Immediately after its creation, the united trade union of the Broad Socialists was admitted as a member of the International Secretariat of Trade Unions, based in Berlin. This act precluded the admission of the trade union of the Narrow Socialists, as each country could be represented by only one union. The International Secretariat of Trade Unions exerted pressure to reunify the trade unions in Bulgaria. The international trade-union conference in Budapest in 1911 addressed the issue and heard the representatives of both unions. It decided to exclude the Broad Socialists’ trade union. At the same time, it demanded the two trade-union head offices in Bulgaria be unified as a condition for membership in the

¹¹⁹ Blagoev, *Izbrani istoricheski sŭchineniya*, vol. 1, 552–554; Dimităr Blagoev, *Partiyata i sindikalnoto dvizhenie v Bălgariya. Dokladi, statii, rechi* (Sofia: Profizdat, 1979), 96–101, 217–234; Hristo Kabakchiev, *Sotsialdemokratsiyata i rabotnicheskite sindikati* (Sofia, 1905), 100, 120.

¹²⁰ Damianova, Bulgaria, 409–412.

International Secretariat. Much like the “outside” pressure for the unification of the two parties, this act had no effect due to the Narrows’ categorical refusal.

Membership in both unions increased slowly. In 1904 the GWTUF had 1,500 members and the FTUF 1,188; in 1914 there were 6,563 GWTUF members and 3,168 UGTUF members. While the Narrows’ trade union had a higher percentage of industrial workers, artisan workers and employees predominated in the Broads’ trade union. A separate federation of state employees’ organizations was founded in 1909.

In the early twentieth century the number of strikes in Bulgaria increased. In 1907–1908 a total of 7,914 participants took part in seventy-five strikes organized by the GWTUF, and a total of 4,082 participants participated in twenty-two strikes organized by the FTUF.¹²¹ However, the movement’s “victories” were only partial and temporary. The strikers’ demands were mainly economic: wage increases, a shorter working day, better conditions at work. Some political demands for social security and labor legislation facilitated the adoption of the first labor laws.

A law for the protection of female and child labor in industrial enterprises was adopted in 1905.¹²² This law became the basis for the government’s policy towards the workers. In 1907 the Labor Inspectorate Act was passed; in 1911 a Department of Labor was created as part of the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor. Another act was passed that restricted working on Sundays or holidays. However, all these laws remained quite ineffective because of lack of will in implementation. Furthermore, some ruling circles in Bulgaria felt there was no genuine working class in Bulgaria and therefore no need for social security.¹²³

* * *

Relations between the socialist parties and the trade unions in the Balkan countries did not exactly duplicate the models in the industrial European countries but did resemble them. In Serbia these relations were close to the German case, in which the party prevailed over the trade unions. The relatively late emergence of the Serbian Social Democratic Party and the influence of Marxist socialism through German-speaking channels explain

¹²¹ Pinkas, *Reformistkata sotsialdemokratsiya v Bălgariya*, 141.

¹²² Ivan Elenkov, “Rabotnicheskiyat vāpros i pravitelstvenata rabotnicheska politika v Bălgariya ot nachaloto na veka,” *Minalo*, 1995, no. 4, 35–40.

¹²³ See Damianova, “Bulgaria,” 401–402, 409–414; Mito Isusov, *Revolutsionnoto profsăyuzno dvizhenie v Bălgariya, 1903–1912* (Sofia: Profizdat, 1962).

the borrowings from what was then the most influential party in the international socialist movement. The roughly equal status of party and union in Romania are reminiscent of the French example, which had a long tradition among the Romanian elites. This can also be explained by the fact that the party recovered only after the creation of the united trade union and by the new party leaders' decision to prioritize the workers' presence in the party. Finally, the split in the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party inevitably led to the formation of two trade unions associated with the Narrow and the Broad Socialists that competed for membership, activities and international representation. The relations between the Narrows and their trade union followed the hierarchy of the German model, which was also favored in Serbia. The Broad Socialists, under the influence of the international socialist movement, tended to move from "union neutrality" towards limiting the autonomy of the trade unions to give the party a leading role. The division of the trade-union movement in Bulgaria continued despite external pressure for unification.

Given the absence of a large working class in the Balkan countries, strong and autonomous trade unions, as in Great Britain, could not be established. The trade union movement in the Balkans could not boast of significant achievements by World War I, and its development was also rather slow. Its major contribution was that it helped get labor legislation introduced in the three states in the early twentieth century, shortly after the united trade-union organizations were created. On the other hand, the government policy on workers' issues developed in direct connection with the policy of protecting the national industries, as workers were the social element of the protected industries.¹²⁴

4. INTERNATIONALISTS AND PATRIOTS

Although proletarian internationalism was seen as an important theoretical postulate of Marxism and was adopted as such by the socialist movement, by World War I the European socialists had not made much progress towards its realization. The split between internationalism and patriotism (nationalism) in socialist circles prevented the desired international unity.

Marx and Engels had coined the slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" as early as 1848 in *The Communist Manifesto*. Their argument was socio-historical and strategic. To wage the class struggle, it was necessary to

¹²⁴ Elenkov, "Rabotnicheskiyat vâpros," 39–40.

go beyond national borders and national disputes, as they concealed the most important factor—class conflict in society—and might delay the revolution. Furthermore, the creation of an international organization and common action were seen as prerequisites for increasing the capacity of the proletariat in its struggle against bourgeois governments. However, this theory was not confirmed in practice. The First International (1864–1876) failed to achieve organizational unity, whereas the Second International (1889–1916) did not go beyond efforts to coordinate the socialists' activities in the European countries and virtually disintegrated during World War I.

At the end of the nineteenth century, proletarian internationalism was associated with the struggle against great-power imperialism and war. Anti-imperialism was understood as opposition to international capital, and pacifism sought to prevent wars caused by nationalist animosities, whose “cannon fodder” was primarily the working class. A strong international supporter of pacifism was the French socialist Jean Jaurès, who issued an appeal to the European socialists to block the national economies through a general strike and thus prevent the war. The idea was not put into practice, as the internationally influential German social democrats remained bound to their national interests and did not accept pacifism as a priority. Most socialists sided with Germany's August Bebel and France's Jules Guesde, who rejected the idea of a general strike and argued that the antiwar struggle had to be waged at a national level. The assassination of Jean Jaurès one month after the beginning of World War I marked the end of the Second International and of its efforts to maintain the peace in Europe.¹²⁵

For National Liberation and Balkan Federation

The opposition to both imperialism and nationalism in the name of a Balkan federation was the hallmark of the Balkan socialists from the end of the 1860s to World War I. At that time part of Southeastern Europe was divided between the Ottoman and the Habsburg (Austro-Hungarian) empires. The decline of the former posed the “Eastern Question” and incited the great powers' imperial ambitions and the young Balkan nationalisms. Russia tried to benefit from the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in order to secure an outlet to the Mediterranean. Conversely, Austria-Hungary and Great Britain sought to preserve the Empire in order to deter Russia and to defend their interests, that is, Habsburg control

¹²⁵ Nay, *Istoria ideilor politice*, 531–533.

over the Western Balkans and Britain's colonial control over the route to India. The Treaty of Berlin (1878), concluded after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878, created a new geopolitical situation in the Balkans, where a number of small nation-states under the influence of the great powers sought territorial expansion and often claimed the same area.

The Balkan national movements, which strove for independence from Ottoman domination and aspired to create modern nation-states uniting all co-nationals, could not succeed without the great powers' intervention. Upon independence the new states also sought the support of the great powers for their irredentist objectives and created opportunistic alliances for a war against the Empire. The Balkan League won a victory over Turkey in the First Balkan War in 1912–1913 but broke down shortly after that, thus paving the way for the Second Balkan War in 1913.

The idea of a Balkan federation had its roots in the national-liberal revolutionary tradition dating back to the late eighteenth century. The national revolutionaries in the Ottoman era were guided by the idea that true liberation from domestic oppression and foreign dependence was only possible through a common struggle of all subjugated Balkan peoples and the creation of a Balkan federation. This was conceived as an alternative to great-power imperialism and small-state vulnerability later on. Early socialism in the Balkans picked up many of these ideas, thus building for itself a respectable emancipatory and revolutionary pedigree.

Svetozar Marković was at the forefront of the movement to liberate the Balkan peoples from Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian domination, to ensure their self-rule and democracy, and to form a Balkan federation. His goals clashed with the official Serbian nationalist project for the unification of all Serbs (*Načertanije*), drawn up by Ilija Garašanin in 1844, which proposed the unification of all Serbs in a Greater Serbia. After 1869 the Serbian liberals themselves stood behind this project at the cost of abandoning the “social question” and focusing exclusively on Serbia's liberation and unification. In contrast to these nationalist visions, Marković considered national and social liberation to be inseparable. Furthermore, he believed that national liberation without political freedom would only replace one kind of oppression with another. Moreover, he did not see a solution to the Serbian question in the establishment of a centralized Serbian state on a national (ethnic) basis and warned of the “dangers” of the implementation of one such scenario. “The people would come out of the fight for Greater Serbia even poorer and more ruined than at present,” said Marković, “and would remain surrounded by the same foes that surround them at present.” He also said, “If the future Serbian state were

based on the principle of nationality, it would inevitably turn the Serbian people into a people of conquerors [and the Serbian state] into a military state."¹²⁶

In his book *Serbia in the East*, Marković strongly opposed the model of national liberation from above, which for him was just a cover for the expansion of Serbia, and criticized the "Greater Serbian hegemony of the ruling class."¹²⁷ Inspired by the Serbian Revolution of 1804 and the Greek Revolution of 1821, he advocated liberation from below by means of a Balkan-wide mass peasant revolution: the Serbian people, along with the other Balkan peoples, had to liberate themselves and form a federation of free and equal states. However, Marković's view on the federation was not free of contradictions. The federation was to rest on citizens "as free persons and equal workers" and to be built on the basis of an association of local self-governing communities, yet unification of the Balkan peoples could be achieved through an alliance of states. On the one hand, the guiding principle for the association was to be free will and not nationality. On the other hand, the federation was to pave the way not only for the social revolution but also for the resolution of the national question.¹²⁸

As for the situation of the Slavs and especially the Serbs in Austria-Hungary, Marković criticized the idea that the Empire could be transformed into a federation of nations.¹²⁹ He called for a revolutionary destruction of the social and political structure of the Habsburg Empire as a precondition for a true and consistent "federalism of nations." Although he did not explicitly advocate the Empire's territorial dismemberment, he believed the revolution had to unite the oppressed Slav nations in Austria-Hungary with their co-nationals beyond the Empire's borders, especially the divided Serb nation. Thus Marković linked the social and political revolution against the imperial ruling class and the imperial state with national liberation and unity, and finally with the emergence of a federation of nations. Such was the approach of the Bulgarian and the Serbian Marxists also vis-à-vis the Ottoman Empire prior to World War I. By contrast, the

¹²⁶ Cited in Mishkova, *Prisposobyavane na svobodata*, 164.

¹²⁷ Svetozar Markovic, "Serbia in the East: Conclusion (1872)," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition and the Balkan Federation, 1871–1915*, a documentary collection edited, selected and introduced by Andreja Živković and Dragan Plavšić, vol. 8, no. 3 (London: Porcupine Press, 2003), 19–21.

¹²⁸ *Discourses of Collective Identity*, vol. 3/1, 402.

¹²⁹ Svetozar Markovic, "Slav Austria and Serb Unity (1871)," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 21–27.

Austro-Marxists of the Habsburg Empire advocated a reformist program of autonomy, preserving the Empire's territorial integrity.

Like Svetozar Marković, the Bulgarian national poet and revolutionary Hristo Botev (1849–1876) fell under the influence of the Russian populists, adding a social dimension to the national liberation struggle of the early 1870s. He argued that the liberation included freeing the peasants from the oppression of both the Ottomans and the Bulgarian *chorbadzhii*, the wealthy notables in the villages who served as moneylenders or tax collectors. As a supporter of the idea of a Balkan federation, Botev warned of the dangers that expansionist Balkan nationalisms, especially those of the existing nation-states (Greece, Romania and Serbia), posed to the equality of the peoples in the Balkan peninsula and to their freedom.¹³⁰

The emancipatory and federalist ideas of Marković and Botev conflicted with the views of Marx and Engels regarding the national question in the Balkans.¹³¹ The founders of Marxism considered Russia to be the main reactionary power in Europe and condemned the liberation struggle of the southern Slavs, fearing that any uprising in the peninsula would benefit Russia's advance towards the Mediterranean. They supported Austria-Hungary's existence as a bulwark against Russia and took the side of the Ottomans in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Only after Russia was weakened and replaced by Austria-Hungary as the "greatest danger" in the Balkans in the last two decades of the nineteenth century would a Balkan federation become useful as a bulwark against Russia. At that point the idea of a federation was taken up by the new generation of Balkan socialists.¹³² Later it was endorsed by the Second International at its congresses in Copenhagen (1910) and Basel (1912). This idea united the Balkan socialists during the war years, at precisely the time when it stood the least chance of success.

Paths toward Federation

Seeking to justify theoretically the need for socialism in backward societies, the Balkan socialists tied the question of capitalist development to the "national question." The relation between internationalism and

¹³⁰ Hristo Botev, "On Discord among the Balkan Peoples (1875)," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 27–29.

¹³¹ See Iliya Todev, "Iztochniyat vāpros vāv vāzɡledite na Marx i Engels," in Iliya Todev, *Kām drugo mīnalo ili prenebregvani aspekti na Bālgarskoto natsionalno vāzrazhdane* (Sofia: Vigal, 1999), 134–148.

¹³² *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 17–19.

patriotism (nationalism) in the Balkan socialist tradition was understood, as a matter of general principle, in favor of internationalism as a guiding principle of the international socialist movement. This relationship was not always clear-cut and stable but depended on the specific political situation, on the evolution of the socialist ideology, the policy of the Second International, and sometimes on the personal leanings of socialist ideologists and leaders. The adoption of Marxism established the dominance of internationalist visions and instrumentalization of the “national question” for the class-guided purposes of the socialist movements, while the reformist ideas often went hand-in-hand with a rehabilitation of nationalist visions.

Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, a newly naturalized Romanian citizen, had views on the nation that were unacceptable to the majority of Romania’s intelligentsia and political class. The father of Romanian socialism characterized the “family-nation”—a concept he attributed in 1886 to the Romanian liberal revolutionaries of 1848—as a “sentimental ideological utopian fallacy” that “never existed, does not exist and will never exist.” In Romania, where anti-Semitism was strong,¹³³ Gherea’s views were sometimes attributed to his Jewish origins. Gherea himself was apparently uncomfortable with his ethnic origin and occasionally tried to conceal it.¹³⁴

Responding to opponents of socialism who charged that socialism and patriotism were incompatible, Gherea claimed that only socialist “cosmopolitanism” (that is, internationalism) was truly national, as its “nature is one of brotherhood, solidarity and love,” and it engendered similar attitudes towards the Romanian nation in other nations, unlike bourgeois “cosmopolitanism,” whose “nature is one of struggle of interests, enmity, hatred, and wars.” For that reason, the Romanian Marxist maintained that it was precisely the socialists, as the voice of the proletariat, who were the most legitimate representatives of the nation.¹³⁵ Later on Gherea clarified his views on the nature of the term “nation” (*neam*), identifying the “true and ideal national integrity” as the union of two elements: “integrity of the country” as “the unity of all territories inhabited by a single nation in a

¹³³ See footnote 86.

¹³⁴ Thus he Romanianized his name, adopting the names Gherea (from the Hebrew *ger*, meaning stranger, or foreigner), and Cass or Cassu (instead of Kats, his name at birth): Michael Shafir, *Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 13–16.

¹³⁵ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Cosmopolitismul lor și al nostru (1891),” in idem, *Opere complete*, vol. 1, 339.

national state" and "integrity of the nation" as "the cultural, moral, ethnic and spiritual unity of this nation." He assumed that "a nation can exist without its own national state" and identified "the language, followed by the national consciousness, and the sense of cultural, moral, spiritual and ethnic unity" as indispensable elements for its existence.¹³⁶ Gherea's concept of the "nation" envisaged the socialists' support for the unification of "the Romanians under foreign domination" into a single nation-state, and tied the process to the goal of the socialist movement. He also supported the project for a Balkan federation as a possible solution to the territorial disputes in the region.

As a faithful follower of Marxism, Dimităr Blagoev espoused the Marxist concept of the international nature of socialism. He described proletarian internationalism as the love of one's own people and of all other peoples, as opposed to the love of the fatherland advocated by the nationalist bourgeoisie, which he said was based on the exploitation of the people. Born in Macedonia, Blagoev was especially interested in the Macedonian question, which was at the core of the Bulgarian national aspirations for a "San Stefano (Greater) Bulgaria."¹³⁷ Given the predominance of the "Bulgarian element" in the area, he declared himself in favor of its liberation from Ottoman rule, which, he said, could only be accomplished through the revolutionary struggle of the population itself. Blagoev asserted that the national problems in the Balkans would be solved by the implementation of the "socialist ideal" in the form of a Balkan "United States" or a "Balkan Republic." He saw the future Balkan federation as a community of nations, whereas other Bulgarian socialists advocated a federation of states.¹³⁸

In turn, the leader of the Broad Socialists, Yanko Sakăzov, sought the collaboration of all social strata for a common policy on the "national question." The Broads relied on peaceful means to solve it, adhered to the idea of autonomy for Macedonia as stipulated in the Treaty of Berlin (1878) and called for a Balkan confederation or federation.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Război sau neutralitate (1914)," in idem, *Opere complete*, vol. 5, 265–267; Horezeanu, C. *Dobrogeanu-Gherea*, 312–320.

¹³⁷ Macedonia was assigned to Bulgaria by the Preliminary Treaty, signed by Russia and the Ottoman Empire on March 3, 1878, at San Stefano but never implemented. It was revised and superseded by the Treaty of Berlin, concluded between the great powers and the Ottoman Empire on July 13, 1878.

¹³⁸ Yotov et al., *Dimităr Blagoev*, 96–97, 140–143; Georgi Părvanov, *Bălgarskata sotsial-demokratiya i makedonskiyat vāpros (Ot kraya na 19 vek do 1918 g.)*. (Sofia: Grafimaks, 1997).

¹³⁹ See Krasimira Tabakova, *BRSDP i bălgarskiyat natsionalen vāpros, 1903–1912* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 2010).

The First Balkan Socialist Conference, held in Belgrade in January 1910, was convened explicitly to adopt a common approach of the Balkan socialists to the national question, but also to condemn the Austrian socialists' opportunist stance during Austro-Hungary's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. Represented were the socialist parties of Serbia, Bulgaria (the Narrows), Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as the socialist groups of Macedonia, the Armenian Social Democratic Hunchakian Party (active in the Ottoman Empire) and Montenegro. The Bulgarian Broad Socialists and the Workers' Federation of Salonika were excluded at the insistence of the Narrows. This act resulted in a boycott by Rakovski and the Romanian socialists, who nevertheless entrusted their mandate to the Serbs. It was decided that a Balkan Social Democratic Federation would be established as a steering body for common action of the Balkan socialist parties. However, this decision, as well as the planned organization of the next conference in Sofia in 1911, was not implemented because of the Narrows' opposition to the proposed admission of the Broad Socialist party to the federation.¹⁴⁰

The conference endorsed the goal of a Balkan federative republic. The resolution identified the imperialist system as the main external barrier to Balkan unification. (By contrast, German Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky regarded the vassal relations of the Balkan states towards Russian tsarism as the main external barrier.) The resolution further declared the alliance between the Balkan bourgeoisies and dynasties to be the main internal obstacle to the federal arrangement (while Kautsky identified only the Balkan monarchies).¹⁴¹

The Bulgarian and the Serbian Marxist leaders Dimităr Blagoev and Dimitrije Tucović pointed out that the struggle against foreign domination could be successful only if combined with a struggle against the Balkan nationalist bourgeoisie and its chauvinism and expansionism. Only the proletariat could fight for national unification. According to Blagoev, "by the increasing pressure of the proletariat, Balkan social democracy will push the bourgeois society toward social development and the Balkan nations toward unification and democracy."¹⁴² In addition to a means of

¹⁴⁰ *Istoriya na Bălgarskata komunisticheska partiya*, 134–135.

¹⁴¹ "Resolution of the First Balkan Social Democratic Conference, 1910," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 164–166.

¹⁴² Blagoev, *Săchineniya*, vol. 13, 542; Dimităr Blagoev, "Political Prospects, 1909," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 187–192; Dimităr Blagoev, "The Balkan Conference and the Balkan Federation, 1911," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 195–198; Dimitrije Tucović,

resolving the national question, the socialist idea of a federation was also seen as a framework for a larger working class and a boost of its potential to launch a socialist revolution. The Bulgarian Narrows and the Serbian Social Democrats stood for national unification within a Balkan federation accomplished "from below."

An alternative project was presented by the leader of the Romanian socialists, Christian Rakovski and was supported by the left wing of the Bulgarian Broad Socialists, and the socialists in the Ottoman Empire (especially the Workers' Federation of Salonika). It proposed a Balkan national unification carried out "from above," which would also include the Ottoman Empire. Rakovski's view on the national question took into account the contemporary dynamics in international relations as well as in the position of the Second International. Back in 1890 Rakovski, together with Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, had criticized the status quo in the Balkans and supported the national movements against the Ottoman Empire. The prospect of a world war in the early twentieth century, however, made him revise this stance. In keeping with the course endorsed by the Second International, Rakovski now pursued the preservation of peace and the territorial status quo in the Balkans in order to prevent a world war, which would benefit only the great powers. The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 bolstered his arguments in favor of the integrity of the Empire as the only impediment to war and imperialism in the Balkans. Since this revolution, he argued, had enabled the solution of the national question in the framework of the Empire, the Balkan states and Turkey could unite in a defensive military alliance directed against the great powers, thus laying the basis for a Balkan confederation.¹⁴³

Between 1908 and 1912, Rakovski worked to construct a strange "popular front," based on the idea of a Balkan confederation and including mutually opposed political forces such as the Young Turks, the bourgeoisie and the reformist and revolutionary parties in the Balkan states as well as the progressive and socialist forces in the West.

In sum, all socialist proponents of Balkan unification on the eve of the Balkan Wars believed that a federation was feasible under capitalist

"The First Balkan Social Democratic Conference, 1910," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 167–174.

¹⁴³ Christian Rakovski, "Towards a Balkan Entente (Revue de la Paix, December 1908)," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 174–187 (<http://www.marxists.org/archive/Rakovski/1908/12/x01.htm>); Christian Rakovski, "The Balkan Confederation and the Turkish-Bulgarian Defensive Alliance (Napred, 14. X. 1911)," in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 193–195.

conditions. If Kautsky and Rakovski saw powerful economic incentives favoring the process of federalization, Blagoev and Tucović emphasized the conflicts between the national bourgeoisies and said only the proletariat could accomplish the federation. The two Balkan wars of 1912–1913 apparently discouraged Rakovski's plan for an evolutionary path to a Balkan confederation from above and reinforced Blagoev and Tucović's statements that the nationalist struggle of the bourgeoisies impeded a lasting solution of the issue of national unifications in the region. Like Rakovski and the Second International, the Bulgarian Narrows and the Serbian socialists tended to avoid demands for further secessions from the Ottoman Empire, due to concerns that the fragmentation of the peninsula would benefit the imperialism of the great powers. In practice, unlike Rakovski and the Second International, the Bulgarian and Serbian socialists did not defend any aspect of the status quo in the Balkans but supported the national struggles within the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empires.¹⁴⁴

Socialist Opposition to the Wars

Reflecting the pacifist orientation of the Second International, the Balkan socialists opposed the First Balkan War—a military confrontation between the Ottoman Empire and a Balkan League composed of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia and Montenegro. But the war's dual character—waged both in the interest of the nationalist Balkan states and for the liberation of colonials—caused some divergences in their positions. The “Manifesto of the Socialists of Turkey and the Balkans,” drafted by Christian Rakovski in October 1912, denounced it as a war of conquest by the Balkan states that might lead to new wars, recommended a Balkan federation as the only means for achieving the unity of all nations in the region and predicted that the most likely victors in the war would be the great powers.¹⁴⁵ After some hesitation the Bulgarian Narrow Socialists signed the Manifesto, as did their opponents, the Broads (this was the only declaration signed by the two rival branches). Additionally, the leader of the Broads and only socialist deputy in the Bulgarian Parliament at that time, Yanko Sakăzov, voted against the war credits.

¹⁴⁴ *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 7–9, 151–156.

¹⁴⁵ Christian Rakovski, “Manifesto of the Socialists of Turkey and the Balkans (*Bulletin Périodique du Bureau Socialiste International*, 3, 1912, no. 9, 5–7),” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 205–209.

The Serbian social democrats also opposed the war but refused to sign the Manifesto opposing Rakovski's reformist approach to the Ottoman Empire. They believed the manifesto would lead to the empire's reconsolidation. They called for a revolution against the Young Turks' regime as a paramount condition for the creation of a Balkan federation. This official stand, however, was challenged by two leading social democrats in Serbia—Triša Kaclerović (1879–1964), one of the two socialist deputies in the Skupština, and Dušan Popović (1884–1918), the leading editor of the party newspaper. They argued for a “less active opposition” to the war, recognizing that in spite of the Balkan states' intentions, the war was “progressive” in that it pursued national liberation and the abolition of Ottoman feudalism.¹⁴⁶

The Second Balkan War of 1913, which pitted Bulgaria against Greece, Serbia, Romania and the Ottoman Empire, demonstrated that the attempts at Balkan unification from above, by the ruling political classes, were not sustainable. In the most important socialist paper on the Balkan Federation published at that time (*Towards a Balkan Federation*, 1913) the Bulgarian Narrow Socialist Hristo Kabakchiev (1878–1940) attacked the policies of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie for having led to the defeat in the war and analyzed the divisive role the great powers played by imposing their control over the Balkan states. However, he admitted that the Balkan League had become an autonomous force that Russia could reassert control over only by encouraging the Balkan rivalries.¹⁴⁷ Unlike Kabakchiev and other Narrow Socialists, who considered the First Balkan War to be progressive, Blagoev invariably condemned both wars as the result of great power imperialism, and of the chauvinism and class aspirations of the Balkan bourgeoisies.¹⁴⁸

The Serbian socialist leader Dimitrije Tucović denounced the expansionism of the Serbian bourgeoisie who envisioned occupying northern Albania in order to gain an outlet to the Adriatic Sea. Serbia's policy provoked hostility from the Albanian population and led to an agreement between the two imperialist powers, Austria-Hungary and Italy, which demanded the creation of an independent Albanian state as a way to block Serbian access to the sea. Tucović pointed out that the Albanians

¹⁴⁶ Triša Kaclerović, “Memoirs of the First Balkan War, 1946,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 209–211.

¹⁴⁷ Hristo Kabakchiev, *Kăm balkanska federatsiya* (Sofia, 1913), cited in idem, “From Victory to Defeat: The Second Balkan War, 1913,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 211–218.

¹⁴⁸ Yotov et al., *Dimităr Blagoev*, 305.

could only gain lasting national liberation and unity as an autonomous unit within a Balkan federation “on the basis of full democracy and fullest equality.”¹⁴⁹ Thus the critique of Serbian nationalism merged with an anti-imperialist critique, while the ideal of a Balkan federation was advertised as an antidote to both nationalism and imperialism.

Dobrogeanu-Gherea opposed Romania’s entry into the Second Balkan War in 1913 against Bulgaria, seeing it as an imperialist extension of the ruling oligarchy’s internal policies. He condemned the incorporation of the “Cadrilater” (the Bulgarian province of Southern Dobrudja) into Romania, warning that a conflict with Bulgaria would only play into the hands of Russia. As for Romania’s foreign policy, Gherea called for “a democratic convention with the Balkan countries and particularly with Bulgaria” and also argued that Austro-Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria should form a bloc as a bulwark against Russia’s expansion.¹⁵⁰

In World War I the Second International collapsed due to the support of nationalism by the major socialist parties. The antiwar stance continued, however, to dominate the ideology of the Balkan socialists at a time when the Balkan countries were again divided (Serbia, Greece and Romania took the side of the Entente, while Bulgaria and Turkey sided with the Central Powers). A few days after Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, Dragiša Lapčević, one of the two socialist deputies, made the first public condemnation of the war in the Skupština. He denounced the war as a consequence of the colonial and imperial policy of the great powers, criticized the Serbian government’s policy of partitioning the Balkans, predicted that the war would devastate Serbia and stressed that “only complete unity between the Balkan peoples would have been a secure defense against Austria-Hungary,” as well as against Russia.¹⁵¹ The socialist deputies voted several times against the war credits in the Serbian Parliament. The death of the party’s leader, Dimitrije Tucović, in a battle in 1914 and the devastation of the country left little space for politi-

¹⁴⁹ Dimitrije Tucović, *Srbija i Albanija. Jedan prilog kritici zavojevačke politike srpske buržoazije* (Belgrade: Kultura, 1945), cited in idem, “Serbia and Albania, 1914,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 218–225).

¹⁵⁰ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, “Conflictul româno-bulgar, 1913,” in idem, *Opere complete*, vol. 2, 73–118.

¹⁵¹ Dragiša Lapčević, “Against War: Speech in Serbian Parliament, 31 July 1914,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 233–236; Dragiša Lapčević, *Rat i srpska socijalna demokratija* (Belgrade: Štampa “Tucović,” 1925), 121–128.

cal activities, but the Serbian socialists did not give up their antiwar and pro-federation stance.¹⁵²

The Second Balkan Social Democratic Conference, held in Bucharest in July 1915, gathered the Romanian socialists, led by Rakovski and Gherea, the Bulgarian Narrows around Blagoev, and Aristotle Sideris, who represented two Greek antiwar socialist groups. The Serbian socialists did not participate, but Dragiša Lapčević was elected honorary president of the conference. The “Manifesto of the Socialist Parties of the Balkans,” drawn and coordinated before the conference, presented dismal prospects for the region against the backdrop of the policies of the great powers and the Balkan governments; it concluded that the only possible salvation was the struggle of the working class and the social democrats for a Balkan federal republic. The discussion on the fate of the Second International during the conference gave vent to criticism (especially by Dimităr Blagoev and Georgi Kirkov) that the International was unable to impose discipline on its national sections. The Conference attempted to coordinate the activities of the antiwar parties by creating a Balkan Workers’ Social Democratic Federation with an Inter-Balkan bureau at its head and an office in Bucharest.¹⁵³ However, due to wartime conditions this “Little International” in the Balkans did not meet again.

The Romanian socialists maintained an antiwar stand before and during World War I, but they leaned toward the Central Powers, especially the Habsburg Empire. Prioritizing his suspicion of Russia, Gherea advocated either neutrality or an alliance with Austria-Hungary against the “Eastern menace.” In his opinion, the Habsburg Empire’s designs on Romania could, at worst, lead to a temporary loss of *state* independence, whereas an alliance with Russia would endanger Romanian *nationhood*. If the Transylvanian Romanians had been capable of safeguarding their national rights and separate identity under Austro-Hungarian rule, an

¹⁵² See Dubravka Stojanović, *Iskušavanje načela. Srpska socijaldemokratska partija i ratni program Srbije 1912–1918* (Belgrade: Timit Book, 1994).

¹⁵³ “The Second Balkan Social Democratic Conference: Manifesto of the Socialist Parties of the Balkans, 1915,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 240–243; “The Second Balkan Social Democratic Conference: Discussion on the Re-establishment of the Socialist International, 1915,” in *The Balkan Socialist Tradition*, 244–248; Christian Rakovsky, “Balkan Conference—Bucharest: The Second Day, July 1915,” <http://www.marxists.org/archive/Rakovsky/1915/07/18.htm>.

eventual incorporation of Romania into the tsar's empire would be followed by enforced Russification, as happened in Bessarabia after 1878.¹⁵⁴

In August 1914, just after the war's outbreak, the extraordinary party congress of the Romanian socialists declared itself for Romania's neutrality. A demonstration in support of neutrality and a mass antiwar rally preceded Romania's entry into the war in 1916 on the side of the Entente. During the war years the authorities banned activity by the pacifist party, and it went through difficult times. Gherea chose to emigrate and remain in Switzerland between 1916 and 1919, while Rakovski was initially arrested before emigrating to Russia in 1917.¹⁵⁵

The two socialist parties in Bulgaria condemned in principle the eventual achievement of Bulgarian national unification by military means. However, their disagreement on the relative importance of internationalism and nationalism remained. The Narrow Socialists sharply criticized the bourgeoisie and the national government and once again championed the creation of a democratic federation of Balkan states in opposition to the military alliances. In 1914 their parliamentary group proposed a bill that would have obliged the government to cooperate with the parliaments of the other Balkan states to prevent war. The Narrows opposed the mobilization, and their deputies voted against the war credit in 1915. Increasingly, they tended to link the resolution of the "national question" with the idea of an international proletarian revolution.

The Broads' position towards the war was more dynamic and, on the whole, set aside the party's interests in favor of the national interest. Initially, they declared themselves in favor of preserving Bulgaria's neutrality, protested the announced mobilization, and abstained from the vote on the war credits. The left wing, represented by the group around Nikola Harlakov, failed to impose its view that the war should be the starting point for a proletarian revolution. But after Bulgaria's entry into the war, the Broads did not oppose the "great national idea" (in the words of their leader, Yanko Sakăzov). They were now trying to speed up the cessation of hostilities and reduce wartime devastation, preserve the unity of the nation and eliminate the restrictive military measures. Internationally, they used their meetings with other European socialists to defend the Bulgarian demands for national unification and, following an agreement

¹⁵⁴ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, "Război sau neutralitate," in idem, *Opere complete*, vol. 5, 237–276; Lucian Boia, "Germanofili": *Elita intelectuală românească în anii Primului război mondial* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2009), 333–334.

¹⁵⁵ Neagoe, *Cazul social-democraților români*, 22–23.

with the government, Sakăzov led negotiations with representatives of the Entente to conclude a separate peace.¹⁵⁶

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Overall, the Balkan socialists maintained an internationalist position on the “national questions” that was directed as much against empires and great-power imperialisms as against the nationalisms of the Balkan bourgeois governments. They saw the solution to these problems in the creation of a Balkan federation, which would also accelerate the movement towards capitalism as a prerequisite for the establishment of socialism. The Narrow Socialists in Bulgaria and the Serbian socialists believed that the federation could be achieved only through pressure from below by the proletariat, organized by the social democrats and directed against the governments. In contrast, Romanian socialist leader Rakovski believed that the Balkan unification should be carried out from above—that is, by the states.

The idea of a Balkan federation was undoubtedly a factor for promoting cooperation among the Balkan socialists. This was confirmed by the two Balkan conferences (in 1910 and 1915), which, however, utterly failed to repair the divisions in the socialist movement. In fact, these forums provided another occasion to deepen the conflict between Narrow and the Broad Socialists in Bulgaria.

The socialists were not the first to advocate the idea of a Balkan federation and make it serve political goals. The idea dates back to the national movements under imperial (Ottoman and Habsburg) domination and is associated with plans for the solution of the Eastern Question. Most socialists saw a Balkan federation as the means for solving the national problems in the region. But other socialists held that a Balkan federation was possible only after the national problems had been solved. The socialist idea of a Balkan federation brought together the social and the national aspects of the liberation struggles, but it remained little more than a noble illusion. It seemed utopian (whether engineered from below or initiated from above) at a time when escalating nationalism and imperialism led to a series of wars.

The attitude of the Balkan socialists toward the two Balkan wars and World War I was mainly pacifist. Most consistent in this respect were the

¹⁵⁶ Yanchev, *Apologiya na bălgarskata sotsialdemokratsiya*, 198–201; Părvanov, *Bălgarskata sotsialdemokratsiya i makedonskiyat văpros*, 219–244.

Bulgarian Narrow Socialists and their ideological counterparts in Serbia, who effectively distanced themselves from the line of action of the major Western socialist parties, which supported their national governments. The Broad Socialists in Bulgaria and the Romanian socialist leaders tended to comply with the inevitability of the military option and to take sides in the military conflict. Their attitudes demonstrated once again that reaching consensus within the international socialist movement on the eve of World War I was practically impossible.

CONCLUSION

The spread of socialist ideas in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries exemplifies the transfer of political ideas in the modern era and illustrates the complex relationship between ideas and environments. Born and developed in the advanced industrial societies of Western Europe, socialist ideas were first imported through the mediation of Russian populism (*narodnichestvo*) by local intellectuals or Russian emigrants. Their further adoption was facilitated not only by the mediation of Russia, but also by that of Western Europe, mainly Germany or France. The programs of the first social democratic parties in all three countries mainly borrowed ideas from the program of the German Social Democratic Party. Balkan socialist reformism also drew on the experience of Western Europe, more specifically on Bernstein's ideas in Germany. However, external influences alone could never explain the diversity and specifics of Balkan socialisms.

Socialist ideas in the Balkans were applied to backward societies that were trying to erase the Ottoman heritage and build modern nation-states based on Western models. At that time the social structure of the Balkan countries was predominantly agrarian, their industries were underdeveloped, and the working class was still emerging. The awareness of their countries' backwardness prompted the local intellectuals to try to overcome this condition and tempted them with ideas of either bypassing or speeding up certain stages in historical development. The incompatibility and tensions between the imported ideas and the underdeveloped environments made the ideas appear unrealistic and required their tailoring to fit the actual conditions. This process led to discrepancies and deviations from and reformulation of the original ideas. One good illustration is the "law on the development of backward societies," formulated by the Romanian Marxist ideologist Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea.

Populism and, later, reformism were the two major conceptual challenges facing the orthodox socialism in the Balkan states while the position towards the peasants and the agrarian question was crucial for the local socialists' legitimation and for the success or failure of their activity.

The agrarian nature of the Balkan societies facilitated populist influences and transfers from rural Russia. Populism was adapted to the local conditions and had a varying impact on the different societies. It was most successfully institutionalized in Serbia, where the Radicals (successors of the first Serbian socialist Svetozar Marković) and their party managed to attract the peasants to their cause and thus become a leading factor on the political stage. In the course of their political evolution, the Radicals experienced a transition from defensive populist socialism to demagogic and aggressive populist nationalism. The Serbian Radicals prevented the creation of a separate agrarian movement by integrating the local peasantry. The later offshoots of the radical movement, such as the Independent Radicals and the social democrats, oriented themselves away from the rural segments of society and towards the urban ones.¹⁵⁷ Serbian radicalism substantially dampened the attraction of Marxism and limited the influence of the Serbian social democrats who launched their party-political activity relatively late.

The adoption of the Marxist doctrine, as an expression of orthodox socialism in Europe, was achieved through dissociation from populism. However, the latter's influence was never completely overcome. While the populists wanted to avoid or bypass the capitalist stage, the Marxist revolutionaries sought to accelerate the development of capitalism as a necessary transitional stage and a prerequisite for socialism. As a result they arrived at the paradox of wanting more capitalism and of affirming the progressive nature of their basic opponent—the bourgeoisie. The dissociation from populism and the adoption of Marxism led to the creation of social democratic parties with urban profiles in Bulgaria and Romania in the early 1890s. At the same time the "school of populism" made some social democrats more sensitive towards the peasant world.¹⁵⁸ But the limitations of the environment in which socialism sought to implant itself caused the first Social Democratic Party in Romania to disband itself and caused a split in the party of the Bulgarian social democrats.

¹⁵⁷ Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 408–410, 411.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 417.

Awareness of the Balkan societies' backwardness and the influence of Western European reformist ideas stimulated the development of Balkan reformism, which was much better suited to the local conditions and the long-term development of capitalism. While the revolutionaries adhered strictly to Marxism at the price of ignoring the specific conditions of the social and economic environment, the reformists took account of these conditions and revised the imported Marxist ideas at the cost of moving away from their original source. Balkan reformism was not identical to reformism in Western Europe due to the different contexts in which the socialist ideas were transplanted and adapted. The Bulgarian Social Democratic Party was mostly affected by internal ideological divisions. The theoretical debate between the Broads and the Narrows on the nature and milieu of socialist activity, the relations with other parties and so on illustrates the difficulties of applying Marxism as a "universal" model in different historical and social contexts.

On the agrarian question the socialists oscillated between recognizing its importance and being skeptical of the peasants' revolutionary potential. In the spirit of Marxist doctrine, the rural population was viewed primarily as a source of the formation of a working class or as petty bourgeoisie who had no place in the socialist movement. Gherea's proposition for the removal of the semi-feudal regime of "neo-serfdom" and the development of capitalism in agrarian Romania inserted the agrarian question into the socialist platform. But the attempts to attract the Romanian peasants into the organized socialist movement in the 1890s had only temporary success and failed to take into account the peasant mindset. Due to their urban and proletarian profile, the parties of the Bulgarian Narrow Socialists and the Serbian social democrats practically ignored the peasants, even when they attempted to integrate the hired agricultural workers. Although the Broad Socialists' leader, Yanko Sakăzov, pleaded for all "productive strata" to unite in a "common cause," his party made no attempt to attract the peasants. Yet in line with the reformist ideology, the Broads approved of an eventual political cooperation with the peasants' political representatives in the name of common democratic objectives.

The revolution remained a distant goal for the Balkan socialists involved in the propaganda of socialist ideas, improving the situation of the working class and coping with their countries' specific political, social and economic problems. Thus the minimum demands in their party programs almost completely displaced the demands for socialist transformation of the Balkan societies. But evolutionary transition to socialism through legal means seemed equally distant and hard to envision.

The socialist movements in the Balkan countries displayed relations toward trade unions similar either to those in Germany, where the party governed the unions, or in France, where a lasting parity between the unions and the party had emerged. The British model of independent trade unions remained impractical because of the weakness of the workers' movement in the Balkans and its concurrence with the socialist movement. The decisions of the international socialist and trade-union movement were also influential.

As far as the "national question" was concerned, the Balkan socialists, primarily the orthodox Marxists, subordinated it to their social agenda, taking up internationalist, anti-imperialist, anti-nationalist and pacifist positions. Patriotism was overshadowed by the movement's "ultimate" goals, for which bourgeois nationalism presented a serious obstacle, despite being a strong motivation for the reformists, particularly during the war years. The concept of a Balkan federation, shared by practically all socialists, was brought up mainly as a remedy for the national disputes in the region. It was to be applied either through pressure exerted by the working class and social democracy from below or by the national governments from above. It stimulated regional connections between the socialists but remained completely impractical in the context of sharp nationalist conflicts.

Contrary to expectations, the movements' similar agrarian environments, similar modernization and political problems, common channels for ideological transfer and common goals did not lead to intense ideological communication and exchanges among the Balkan socialists. The intermingling of ideas was spontaneous rather than deliberate, because local socialist ideologists and leaders preferred to look directly to Western European or Russian sources. The sharply disputed national issues between the Balkan states and the opponents' accusations that socialism was incompatible with patriotism further deterred mutual influences in the Balkans. Contacts were more common between doctrinaire socialists such as the Narrows in Bulgaria and the social democrats in Serbia. The attempts to coordinate positions during the two Balkan socialist conferences foundered upon serious disagreements among the Bulgarian socialists.

Early socialism in Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria had similarities and differences for a wide range of reasons. In Serbia authentic socialism was marginalized due to the strong influence of the Radicals and the doctrinaire attitude of the party leaders. In Romania, where the majority of the peasants and urban workers were deprived of the right to vote, socialism

was seen more as an “exotic plant,” despite the sharp theoretical analyses of Gherea and the organizational efforts of his followers. By comparison, Bulgarian socialism was prominent on the political scene. This may have been due to the belated emergence of Bulgarian nationalism (compared to the neighboring countries), the fragmented political scene and weak liberalism, the strong egalitarianism of most of the population, and the positive perception of ideological influences coming from (or through) Russia. The Bulgarian socialists’ impact in the 1890s was also due to their populist heritage and propaganda, which met the smallholders’ expectations, and the aspirations of a faction of alienated intelligentsia for greater democratic rights.¹⁵⁹ Finally, the party’s 1903 split created some opportunities for projecting more distinct political profiles and attracting more supporters, all the more that the rivalry between the parties of the Narrows and the Broads stimulated their public activity.

Balkan socialism intertwined in unexpected ways with (economic and, to a lesser extent, political) liberalism. Despite political confrontations between the proponents of liberalism and socialism, the two ideologies shared a common understanding of the need for accelerated development of capitalism in line with the “Western model.” A good example of this closeness was the cooperation of socialists and liberals in Romania and the “defection” of most leaders of the first social democratic party in the country to the National Liberal Party. But while for the liberals capitalism was the ultimate goal for the backward societies in the region, for Marxist socialists it remained only a transitional stage on the way to socialism. The orthodox Marxists in the Balkan countries proved, strangely enough, to be more radical supporters of accelerated capitalist development, since they saw it as a prerequisite for the formation of the working class, which would carry out the socialist revolution. For the same reason they showed little concern over the ruin of the peasants and artisans, who constituted the bulk of the population.

The greatest contributions of the European Left in general, as in the case of early Balkan socialists, were the extension of political rights in the process of modernization and the addition of “social justice” to the concept of the “sovereignty of the people.”¹⁶⁰ As a plan for reconstruction of societies and a program of collective life, socialism was “entirely oriented

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 410–411.

¹⁶⁰ Elley, *Forging Democracy*, 9–12, 17–18; Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths toward Modernity*, 418–419.

toward the future.” As “a cry of grief, sometimes of anger,” which promised social reforms, socialism was particularly attractive to intellectuals in backward societies.¹⁶¹ Although as an ideology it was born in developed Western societies, socialism and its offshoots and variations would be politically applied in the less developed countries of the East (including Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria). The early history of Balkan socialism in a comparative perspective as laid out above broadens our understanding of an ideology whose mutation into revolutionary communism would shape the region’s development in the second half of the twentieth century.

¹⁶¹ Emile Durkheim, *Socialism* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 39, 41; McClellan, *Svetozar Marković*, 9–13.

AGRARIAN IDEOLOGIES AND PEASANT MOVEMENTS IN THE BALKANS

Roumen Daskalov

The peasant movements in the Balkans (and Eastern Europe in general) were guided by an ideology called peasantism or agrarianism, which can be defined as “the outlook of the peasantry on the complex mix of political and socioeconomic issues in which the peasants are interested and for whose solution they are fighting.”¹ To be more precise, the various peasant movements had their own versions of agrarianism, developed by their leaders and ideologists, and they evolved over time as the socioeconomic circumstances and the political situation changed. This essay starts with a general description of agrarianism as a backdrop against which the cases of the strongest peasant movements in the Balkans will be treated and ends with a comparison between them, as well as an attempt to identify influences and entanglements.

AGRARIANISM: AN OVERVIEW

Allowing for variations in ideological views, a kind of ideal type of the peasantist (agrarian) ideology can be put forward. It contains basic features shared by all (or most) peasant movements and has been distilled from the particular peasant movements. I will examine it here at the beginning, to avoid repetition and provide a common background against which variations can be highlighted. To begin with, agrarianism (peasantism) is based upon the absolute value of the peasants and the peasant

¹ Branko M. Peselj, “Peasantism: Its Ideology and Achievements,” in *Challenge in Eastern Europe*, ed. Cyril Black (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1954), 118. Another description of the agrarian ideology is provided by the agrarian leader George M. Dimitrov, “Agrarianism,” in *European Ideologies*, ed. F. Gross (New York, 1948), 396–452. See also Piterim Sorokin, *Ideologiya agrarizma* (Prague and Sofia, 1924). A sympathetic description of the peasantist ideology and political agenda appears in David Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant: A Study in Social Dogmatism* (New York: Collier Books, 1961; first edition, 1951), 139–156. More distanced descriptions appear in George Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant in Eastern Europe, 1919–1930* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1966), 40–48; Heinz Gollwitzer, “Europäische Bauerndemokratie im 20. Jahrhundert,” in *Europäische Bauernparteien im 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Heinz Gollwitzer (Stuttgart and New York: Gustav Fischer Verlag, 1977), 1–82, esp. 34–47.

way of life—the “peasant mystique” (as its axiological nucleus). This may be formulated in various ways: praise of unique peasant qualities and virtues; the assertion of a sacred bond to the soil and nature, making the peasant a “natural” human; the usefulness of peasant labor; or presenting the peasantry as the backbone (and best part) of the nation, as a source of regeneration of the urban social strata. Typically, the village and the healthy and virtuous peasant life were contrasted with the physical and moral “degeneration” of city-dwellers. Where no mystique is asserted, the peasants and their way of life are nevertheless regarded as most precious and worth preserving and promoting. The supposedly versatile skills and harmoniously developed personality of the peasant are contrasted with the “partial” and unevenly developed urban worker in his mechanical environment. This “peasant exclusivity” (or priority) and a sort of “peasant messianism” is the counterpart of the glorification of the urban working class by Marxism. Here the peasant is the man of the future.

The value basis of agrarianism supports a socioeconomic and political program that promotes peasant interests. A central and essential feature is attachment to small (and medium-sized) land property—the family smallholding—as the economic basis of the peasantry and its way of life. It is sometimes called “labor property” (or “property of use”), the idea being that a family can work it without hired labor. In connection with this, there is the cult of labor, agricultural work in particular, regarded as most honorable and the only just source of income. Smallholder (peasant) agriculture is held to be not only viable and resilient, but more productive and efficient than large estates, and great effort is expended to prove that. Recognizing some deficiencies of the peasant economy, great hopes are placed on cooperatives of various kinds (for credit, sales, production, and so on). Cooperatives are also regarded as a means to avoid capitalist middlemen and resist the incursions of capitalism in agriculture. In addition, they are appreciated for fostering trust, cooperation, social responsibility and humaneness and thus overcoming the supposed “individualism” and the isolation of the peasant, but also the “egoism” of capitalist entrepreneurs.

In general, agriculture is given priority over industry as the major path of development, to be promoted by various means and policies. This is specifically meant for the (underdeveloped) predominantly agrarian countries in Eastern Europe. Peasantism typically allows for certain type of industries, especially for processing agricultural products (and for extraction of natural resources), but it is decisively against industrial protectionism, which fosters “artificial” industries at the expense of agriculture.

Peasantism as a rule is suspicious of capitalism in its various guises, especially of its intrusion in agriculture through credit and trade. By extension, it is also suspicious of large-scale private enterprises in other economic spheres and prefers cooperatives or (where larger enterprises are needed) nationalization.

In the political sphere peasantism has an affinity for democracy and legality, pointing to the alleged democratic qualities and sense of justice of the peasant. It is in favor of universal suffrage, the extension of direct democracy (initiative, referendum, the recall) and administrative decentralization. This is connected with the expectation that full-fledged democracy in a peasant society will bring the peasant parties to power as representatives of the peasant masses—a “peasant state” or “peasant democracy.” The economic “democracy” of small rural (and urban) producers is viewed as the appropriate basis for political democracy. The state is regarded as an instrument for the transformation of society; hence the strong interventionism and etatism. Additional traits of agrarianism include an anti-military stance and a desire for peace (attributed again to the peace-loving qualities of the peasant) and channeling of resources toward socioeconomic development.

One can approach individual agrarian movements by asking key questions about their attitude toward industrialization (and what kinds of industries they allow for); toward capitalism as such and capitalism in agriculture in particular; and toward urbanization and the cities. Peasantism in general can be viewed as a response of underdeveloped agrarian countries to the challenges of modernization, but one should be careful not to assume an anti-modernist stance, as so many of the agrarians’ critics did. One can also pose questions about their attitude toward the bourgeois establishment and the state under its guidance; toward political partners and political compromises; toward socialism; and about the means they are prepared to apply in pursuing their goals. Differences and nuances will then appear, and one can judge how radical (“revolutionary”) a given agrarian current is, depending on whether it searches for a “third way” or remains within the existing system. Another relevant question is their position on national issues and how nationalist they are.

Several varieties of agrarianism have been distinguished according to certain features, usually by political opponents for critical purposes or by historians to simplify the diversity, such as “bourgeois” (commercial) agrarianism versus “petty bourgeois” agrarianism (of semi-subsistent small-holders); moderate (reformist) agrarianism versus radical (revolutionary)

agrarianism; (Western) agrarianism, (Eastern European) peasantism, and (Russian) populism.² It is especially useful to distinguish Eastern European “peasantism” from Western “agrarianism.” In the context of advanced commercialized agriculture in the West, agrarianism meant advocacy of agrarian interests of farmers and larger landowners (vis-à-vis industrial or commercial interests) through customs duties, agricultural credit, lighter taxation, establishment of cooperatives and so on. In underdeveloped Eastern Europe, the main issue was the fate of the peasants and peasant agriculture in a society undergoing rapid change and painful modernization—a society “in transition.” Related to that (as pointed out by David Mitrany): what was a Land Question in the West, that is, an issue of productivity and efficiency of the use of land, presented itself as a Peasant Question in the East, that is, a social issue about the fate of the peasants.³ The distinction between “agrarianism” and “peasantism” is not consistently drawn in the literature and the words are used interchangeably (here as well), but one should keep in mind the differences. Of course, peasantist problems could be found in Western (especially Mediterranean) European countries, while farmers’ agrarianism existed in more developed parts of Eastern Europe (such as Czechoslovakia).

Peasantism in Eastern Europe was deeply influenced by the kindred ideologies of (Russian) populism and (Western) agrarianism. The Russian populism (*narodnichestvo*) from the second half of the nineteenth century was a kind of agrarian socialism, which held that Russia could bypass the capitalist stage of development and proceed directly to socialism through the egalitarian peasant commune (*mir*) and the *artel* (a community of artisans).⁴ Its forerunners were Herzen (who first formulated the idea of direct transition to socialism through the peasant commune) and Chernyshevsky, and its principal strategists were Peter Lavrov, Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Tkachev. Its first manifestation was the “going to the people” movement in the early 1870s, which failed because the peasants did not

² The distinction between “bourgeois” and “petty bourgeois” agrarianism appears, for example, in A.F. Noskova, “K voprosu ob agrarizme i krest'yanskom dvizhenii v stranakh tsentral'noi i Yugo-vostochnoi Evropy v mezhdvoennoi period,” *Slavyanovedenie*, 1981, no. 2, 40–57, esp. 44–45.

³ David Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant in Rumania: The War and Agrarian Reform (1917–1921)* (London and New Haven, CT: Oxford University Press and Yale University Press, 1930), 460; Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant*, 60.

⁴ Richard Pipes, “Narodnichestvo: A Semantic Inquiry,” *Slavic Review* 23, no. 3 (1964), 441–458. Another account of populism appears in Oliver Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes of Bolshevism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), 3–17.

respond to the socialist agitation. This was followed by the organization Land and Will (*Zemlya i volya*), with the Bakunist idea that the intellectuals should not try to lead the people in the name of abstract bookish principles (which was Lavrov's notion of socialist propaganda) but adapt themselves to the people as they are and promote the people's resistance to the government in the name of its everyday needs; the people were to be liberated through their own efforts, not from above. When this strategy failed as well, some *narodniki* created the organization People's Will (*Narodnaya volya*) and turned to terrorist methods, arguably going outside the framework of "classical populism." Thus the other meaning of Russian populism is a theory of the relation between the elite (*intelligentsia*) and the masses (people), which at one point postulated the "hegemony of the masses" over the educated elite, but before and after that posited a leadership role for the *intelligentsia*.

Alongside the revolutionary trend, in the 1880s and 1890s there was a social-reformist current of populism, the "legal populism" (or liberal populism) of Nikolai Mikhailovsky, Vasily Vorontsov and Nikolai Danielson.⁵ From the last two came the most ambitious attempt to analyze Russian capitalism and to argue for the possibility of non-capitalist development in Russia. Vorontsov in particular argued that capitalism in Russia was artificial and could not develop without state subsidies because of the absence of foreign markets and the limited domestic market (due to the poverty of the masses). For that reason successful industrialization could not be achieved along capitalist lines but only under the auspices of the state, through socialist planning and investment. Such a non-capitalist industrialization (along with "socialization of labor") would supposedly be less painful and more humane and would spare the peasants and artisans the evils of "primitive accumulation." Then the final phase of socialized "popular production" (that is, socialism) would be reached. This analysis contained both an ideology of small producers (created for them by the Russian *intelligentsia*) and a theory of development of an underdeveloped country vis-à-vis advanced states.

Russian populism influenced Eastern European peasantism through people such as Svetozar Marković in Serbia (a direct disciple of Chernyshevsky), Constantin Stere in Romania, Ante Radić in Croatia, Bolesław

⁵ On legal populism and Vorontsov and Danielson, see Andrzej Walicki, "Russia," in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, eds. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 62–96.

Wysłouch in Poland and a few *narodniki* in Bulgaria. More will be said about individual cases later. The general appeal and resonance of *narod-nichestvo* in the backward Balkan peasant societies came from its concern for the peasantry and a certain idealization of the village, the emphasis on agrarian development, the fear of capitalism and the desire to avoid it, and the social engagement of the intelligentsia in favor of the (peasant) people. But the ideas of the Russian populists were not fully endorsed by their Balkan (and Eastern European) followers and were diluted or transformed in the process of adaptation. The very different village community here could not become a locus of socialist hopes, and socialism in general was not an issue. Only the early Serbian socialist Svetozar Marković considered the Serbian *zadruga* (extended family with joint property) to be a seed of socialism. In a similar manner some populists placed their hopes on the traditional institution of the Romanian *stână*, or groups of semi-nomadic shepherds who collectively produced and sold cheese (described by the Romanian ethnographer Henri H. Stahl), as a model for a kind of “peasant democracy.”⁶ In keeping with the *narodniki* ideal of intelligentsia serving the people, teachers and agronomists played a prominent role in the formation of the Balkan peasant movements. But in contrast with the radicalized Russian *narodniki*, their Balkan followers did not aspire toward agrarian socialism, and their peasantist heirs rejected it altogether; the most radical sought a “third way” between capitalism and socialism. Living within newly created nation-states with liberal institutions, they were more “legalist” and gradualist and less revolutionary than the Russian *narodniki* in their struggles against the stubborn Russian autocracy. In this respect they came closer to Russian “legal populism” (and they often cited Mikhailovsky).⁷ The full-fledged Balkan peasant movements departed even further from Russian populism by supporting private property, by developing mass peasant parties engaged in legal political competition to attain power, and by rejecting revolutionary methods. Characteristically, the ideas of the American reformer Henry George in his famous book *Progress and Poverty* about socialization or nationalization of the land (by taking the full rent in the form of a single tax)—a Western form of

⁶ Angela Harre, “Between Marxism and Liberal Democracy: Romanian Agrarianism as an Economic Third Way,” in *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population of the Baltic Area, 1880–1939. Studia Baltica. Serie II* (Huddinge, Sweden: Soedertoerns hogskola, 2008), 57–73, esp. 62–63.

⁷ Ghiță Ionescu, “Eastern Europe,” in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, 97–121, esp. 98–106.

agrarian socialism—were known to Balkan agrarians but were not advocated by them.

Eastern European peasantism was also influenced by Western agrarianism. Agrarianism (whose predecessor was the Physiocrats) considered agriculture to be the most useful human activity and a basis of the whole economy; therefore, agriculture had to enjoy a privileged status and receive protection by the state. The peasant as immediate producer (of primary goods) was considered a special social category; the peasant way of life was valued and extolled as the source of specific traits and virtues. In Western social reformist thought at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, (peasant) agriculture or family farming was promoted as a means of combating industrial overproduction and achieving a more balanced economy, as well as alleviating urban concentration and unemployment, but also for moral and social-hygienic purposes, such as fighting physical “degeneration” of the industrial workers and improving the health of the population and the nation’s biological “stock.” Especially popular in Eastern Europe was the book by the French statesman and agrarian protectionist Jules Méline *Return to the Land and Industrial Overproduction*, translated into many languages.⁸ Other well-known figures included the Belgian socialist Emile Vandervelde, Charles Gides (theorist of cooperatives), Dr. Ernst Laur (leader of the Swiss Agrarian Union), the economist Albert Schaeffle and Pierre Caziot.

Western agrarianism was shaped in conditions of advanced commercialized agriculture and urban industrial capitalism. It aimed at the protection of agrarian interests, not only peasant, but also capitalist agrarian interests, through the instruments of the state, especially commercial, tax, and credit policies. The agrarian interests were not necessarily represented and defended by peasant parties in political struggles and could be lobbied by other agrarian organizations (such as unions and cooperatives), often fusing small farmers with big capitalist landlords. These conditions precluded radical tendencies and favored compromise and collaboration with other political forces. In Eastern Europe only Czech agrarianism, after its radical initial years, approached this type of agrarianism in the course of its evolution. But in other Eastern European states as well, radical tendencies were softened over time, as was shown in the evolution of peasantism toward ideology of the “middle classes,” collaboration of

⁸ Jules Méline, *Le retour à la terre et la surproduction industrielle* (Paris: Hachette, 1905). See also Sorokin, *Ideologiya agrarizma*.

the peasant parties with the traditional bourgeois parties and lobbying of agrarian interests through various channels. It is tempting to suggest an ideal-type scheme for how the Eastern European peasant movements evolved: from intellectual-led populism through practical peasantism toward an ideology of the middle classes. However, not all peasant parties passed through all three stages.⁹

Western agrarianism, not to mention various social reformers, provided (Eastern European) peasantism with economic, sociological, ethnographic, philosophical, historical and other ideas, arguments and theories about the role and significance of agriculture and its current tendencies. But peasantism was much more radical than Western agrarianism and even revolutionary, given the conditions in which it arose.¹⁰ It had a strongly expressed social ethos rather than a purely economic character. It was a real rising of the peasants either against "feudal" remnants in the countryside (big land estates, various forms of peasant dependence) with demands for emancipation and land redistribution, or else against exploitation by the towns and the state in conditions of backward and under-commercialized (largely self-subsistent) agriculture. Agrarian reform and redistribution of the land were typical demands in countries with big landowners, where the peasants were "land-hungry" (Romania, Hungary and parts of Yugoslavia). The ideal for social justice was that all peasants should have enough land to live from. That is why in the Eastern European reception of Western agrarianism and social reformism, one can speak of reinterpretation and even "mistaken self-identification." Measures and recipes intended as a cure for excessive industrialization and crises of overproduction in the West (the title of Meline's book) were taken as a remedy for backward agriculture; while Meline appealed for workers to return to the land, the Balkan peasants had never deserted it. Nevertheless, the reception had a beneficial effect and proved to be a "productive misunderstanding."

Connected with (Western) agrarianism and social reformism, the cooperative idea (cooperatism or cooperativism) proved especially attractive

⁹ Such a scheme is implicit in Gollwitzer, "Europäische Bauerndemokratie," 34–47.

¹⁰ Irina V. Mikhutina, "O sotsial'nom kharaktere i sotsial'nykh aspektakh program i deyatelnosti krest'yanskikh partii stran Tsentral'noi i Yugo-vostochnoi Evropy," in *Sotsial'naya struktura i politicheskie dvizheniya v stranakh Tsentral'noi i Yugo-vostochnoi Evropy. Mezhuvoennyi period* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo "Nauka," 1986), 152–170. Mikhutina speaks of "artificial points of contact" between Eastern European peasantism and Western agrarianism. See also Noskova, "K voprosu ob agrarizme," 43–45. Noskova speaks of the "adaptation" of Western agrarianism towards the conditions in particular countries in Eastern Europe, where it crystallized into concepts of "transformation" of the existing conditions (or order).

to peasantism in the Balkans. Typically, the most enthusiastic and radical ideologists of cooperativism enjoyed the greatest popularity in the Balkans, especially the Nîmes school (named after the French city) of Charles Gide and Bernard Lavergne and their Russian follower Vahan Totomianz, Ernest Poisson, the Englishwoman Beatrice Webb and the American James Warbasse. What the Balkan peasantists identified with in their teachings was the social and moral meaning attached to the cooperatives (of social justice, without exploitation and capitalist profits) as well as the idea of a total new economic order or system, variously called a "cooperative republic," "cooperative order," a "cooperative democracy" or a "cooperative state."¹¹ Yet these concepts (with the exception of the radical socialist trend of Poisson and others), though they stressed reordering the economy along cooperative lines, did not extend beyond the economic sphere to reform the political order and the state, allowed for the parallel existence of capitalist enterprises and economic competition, and did not envision cooperation by force (socialists including). Cooperativism in this radical form was given a still more radical twist in the Balkans (to be discussed in more detail later) and came to be identified with the peasantist "third way." Besides, urban-based consumers' cooperatives (most developed in the West) and consumers' interests stood at the basis of Western doctrines of cooperativism (while other types of cooperatives were considered less important); it was thus devoid of a class dimension. By contrast, the cooperative doctrine in the Balkans relied on rural (credit and sales) cooperatives of small producers that prevailed in rural conditions and gave it a markedly social (class) dimension.

The peasantist ideology developed relatively late. It was deeply influenced by the earlier ideologies of liberalism and socialism. Without going into the intricacies of the relations among these ideologies, we can mention some similarities and contrasts. With liberalism it shared a number of fundamental tenets: constitutionalism and representative government,

¹¹ Charles Gide, *Le sociétés coopératives de consommation* (Paris, 1924); *Le coopératisme. Conférences de propagande* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1929); *Le programme coopératiste* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1928); Bernard Lavergne, *Le régime coopératif: étude générale de la coopération de consommation en Europe* (Paris: A. Rousseau, 1908); *L'ordre coopératif* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1926); Ernest Poisson, *The Co-operative Republic* (Manchester: Co-operative Union, 1925); Vahan Totomianz, *Teoriya kooperatsii* (Moscow: Svoboda, 1918); *Osnovy kooperatsii* (Berlin: Knigoizdatel'stvo "Slovo," 1923); *Sushtnost' i polozhenie sovremennoi kooperatsii* (Berlin: Russkoe universal'noe izdatel'stvo, 1922); Beatrice Webb, *Cooperative Movement in Great Britain* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co, 1891); James Warbasse, *Co-operative Democracy through Voluntary Association of the People as Consumers* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927).

individual and civil rights, free economic initiative and competition. It affirmed the principle of private property in particular. At the same time it wanted to put a limitation on the size of private property, especially in agriculture, and viewed capitalism with suspicion. Liberalism increasingly came to be seen as the ideology of unregulated “wild” capitalism and egoistic pursuit of profit, and the attitude toward it became more critical in the interwar era. Peasantism proposed various means to curb liberalism’s exploitative and antisocial tendencies, such as state intervention and regulation, state monopolies, (partial) nationalization and especially the expansion of cooperatives. Cooperatism (or cooperativism) in particular was seen as a counterweight to individualism and a way to harmonize individual and social interests.¹²

(Marxist) socialism was the other major influence upon the peasantist ideology. To begin with, the two ideologies shared a general attitude of indignation over and revolt against the existing order and the idea of a socially just society. Some peasantists began as socialists before changing sides, and leftist currents developed within peasantism. Especially important for agrarianism was the revisionist debate within Western social democracy on the trends in agriculture, provoked by the fact that Marx’s prediction about concentration of the land did not materialize. The revisionist ideas of Eduard David, Friedrich Hertz, Eduard Bernstein and (the more reluctant) Karl Kautsky on the qualitative difference between agriculture and industry regarding (lacking) concentration of the “means of production” and some advantages of smallholder agriculture over the big estates found a warm reception in agrarian milieus. Socialism, and later communism, were also stimulating in the (negative) sense that agrarian ideas were developed in debating and by rejecting the socialist and later the communist tenets. Thus agrarianism stressed the principle of private property as a guarantee of personal independence, freedom and a stimulus for work and initiative, in contrast to the communist abolishment of private property, which would be detrimental to all these. Agrarianism also declared its commitment to democracy, representative government and legal, peaceful means of political struggle, in marked contrast with the revolutionary and violent methods of communism (but like the legalism of social democracy). On the other hand, with its claim to represent

¹² See, for example, the Bulgarian leftist agrarianist Mihail Genovski, *Obshtestvenost i kultura* (Sofia, 1939), 135–138. Economic liberalism is characterized as a system that actually makes it possible for the economically stronger to exploit the weaker. It is closely associated with capitalism as its political ideology; capitalism is characterized as chaotic and, in its later “imperialist” stage, as speculative and creating insecurity.

the peasants as a class or an "estate," the agrarian movement imitated socialism, which claimed to champion the interests of the proletariat. In extraordinary situations, in spite of its principled legalism and pacifism, an agrarian movement could become revolutionized and even adopt the idea of class struggle and a kind of "dictatorship of the peasantry." Finally, the ideals of some radical leftist agrarian currents for a socially just future society on a thoroughly cooperative basis with nationalization of major enterprises came to closely resemble state socialism.

The peasantist ideology's eclectic and unsystematic character has often been pointed out, particularly by its adversaries. It developed primarily as an instrument of social and political struggles, closely related to particular conditions of life, and not as an abstract thought system aimed at internal consistency and systematicity. The peasantist leaders and ideologists borrowed freely what they considered appropriate and useful for the particular situation and needs in their countries; the borrowed elements combined in various ways and formed "syntheses," often quite different and more radical than the prototypes. The most important criterion was whether they supported the peasant interests and furthered the peasantist cause. Some peasantists even prided themselves on the down-to-earth approach. Others were not so satisfied with this (especially vis-à-vis the Marxist doctrine) and tried to remedy the situation by supplying a philosophical foundation from the then-modern theories, such as "biological materialism" (with its theory of instincts) or philosophical idealism.¹³ In addition, a teleological interpretation of the history of mankind was put forward with the peasants as the final victor. The Croatian ideologist Rudolf Herceg presented universal history similarly to Marx, as a history of class struggles and domination of the (mainly peasant) society by successive "estates." Yet unlike Marx, he did not stop with the victory of the "fourth estate" (the workers) but carried it to a successful takeover of the peasantry as the "fifth estate" that would solve the social question and usher in a just and humane government. The beginnings of a history of the peasant estate are to be found with Aleksandăr Stamboliyski as well.¹⁴

¹³ Biological materialism was characteristic of Bulgarian agrarianism since Stamboliyski. See, for instance, Dimitrov, "Agrarianism," 397–403; Mikhail Genovski, *Filosofska osnova na zemedelskata ideologiya* (Sofia: Zemedelsko izdatelstvo "Al. Stamboliyski," 1945). The Croatian ideologist Branko Peselj stresses idealistic principles, religious beliefs and the role of tradition: Peselj, "Peasantism," 119.

¹⁴ Rudolf Herceg, *Die Ideologie der kroatischen Bauernbewegung* (Zagreb: Rudolf Herceg und Genossen, 1923), 21–45, esp. 42–45; Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, *Politicheski partii ili saslovni organizatsii?* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BZNS, 1920, first edition in 1909), 111–114.

The many and diverse ideological influences on Eastern European peasantry should not be seen as indicative of a lack of originality. In fact, peasantry was an original and coherent search for a solution for the problems of (under)development uniquely suited to local conditions. It envisioned a path of development that was not a break with, and superseding of, previous socioeconomic conditions, but stood in a definite continuity and built upon them.

Despite all outside influences, the peasantist ideology (and movement) was essentially indigenous. That is, it was embedded in its national milieu and in close touch with local realities, unlike the international communist movement, with its uniformity and transnational diffusion.¹⁵ This is a major reason for the diversity of the peasantist views and ideas. Therefore, analysis of them should take national conditions into consideration, especially the land tenure (smallholders or mostly large estates) and the degree of development of the country and of its agriculture in particular, but also political conditions, such as the political system established by the constitution and whether the peasants were enfranchised, which were the ruling classes, the major political forces and the ideological climate. The agrarian movement was also influenced by international events and trends. The conditions for the "Green Rising," as it was called, were prepared by World War I and it erupted in the war's aftermath; the Depression foreshadowed the end of the movement, and it finally fell victim to communism.¹⁶

In what follows I will address the cases of the strongest agrarian movements in the Balkans and their ideologies—in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Serbia, though not Greece, where agrarianism developed later and remained weak.¹⁷ They will be approached through the views of their leaders and ideologists, at their strongest moments, while briefly indicating further developments. Special attention will be paid to the way the agrarian ideology and the peasant movements in the Balkans responded

¹⁵ Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, 6, 26.

¹⁶ The "Green Rising" (in parallel with the "Red Rising") was the name given to the eruption of the peasants on the political scene after World War I. The phrase appears first in the work of the journalists Dorothy Thompson and Marcel W. Fodor, "The Green Rising," in *The Nation and the Athenaeum* 29 (London) (April–September 1921), 389, 426, 496. Somewhat later it was used as a book title by William Bizell, *The Green Rising: A Historical Survey of Agrarianism* (New York: Macmillan, 1926).

¹⁷ On the peasant movement in Greece: Nencho Dimov, "The Peasant Movement in Bulgaria and Greece between the Two World Wars," in *Relations et influences réciproques entre grecs et bulgares XVIII^e–XX siècles* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1991), 129–150.

to the challenges of modernization and dealt with the problems of their predominantly agrarian societies.

BULGARIAN AGRARIANISM

Bulgaria emerged from Ottoman rule in 1877–1878 as a country of independent peasant smallholders, and this became even more pronounced with the seizure and division of the former Turkish estates (*chiflik*) among Bulgarian peasants.¹⁸ Populism in Bulgaria (notwithstanding some vague preliberation antecedents) spread in the 1880s and 1890s under the influence of the ideas of N. Mikhailovsky and P. Lavrov and was accordingly less a literary idealization of peasant life than a civic movement actively calling for social change. It emphasized the duty of the intelligentsia towards “the people,” meaning the peasantry, namely, to work among it for its “enlightenment” (education), dissemination of agricultural knowledge and public hygiene, organization of credit cooperatives, and so on.¹⁹ The peasant movement emerged somewhat later at the end of the nineteenth century as a protest against heavy taxation (and one particular tax), usury and the exploitation of the backward village by the town, and not from “land hunger.” The Bulgarian Agrarian (*zemedelski*, literally: of land-tillers) National Union (BANU) was founded in 1899 as the result of a grassroots movement that had several points of crystallization around village teachers and agronomists.²⁰ The populist (*narodniki*) influence played a role, especially through populist-minded teachers, agronomists, doctors and low-ranking civil servants. It is reflected in the first program of BANU, where the goal was formulated as “the improvement of agriculture and its branches, the moral and material improvement of the peasant, and the general defense

¹⁸ See the impressions of Edward Dicey, *The Peasant State: An Account of Bulgaria in 1894* (London: John Murray, 1894).

¹⁹ Vivian Pinto, “The Civic and Aesthetic Ideals of the Bulgarian Narodnik Writers,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 32, no. 79 (1954), 344–366. Alongside the literary populism, an example of civic populism is Nikola Gabrovski, *Nravstvenata zadacha na intelligentsiyata* (Sofia, 1889).

²⁰ On the circumstances of the emergence of BANU, see the agrarian authors: Prokopi Kiranov, *Bălgarskoto zemedelsko dvizhenie. Idei, razvitie, delo* (Sofia, 1927); Marko Turlakov, *Istoriya, printsipi i taktika na Bălgarskiya zemedelski naroden săyuz* (Stara Zagora, 1929); Mihail Genovski, *Pătyat na zemedelskoto sdruzhavane. Istoricheski ocherk* (Sofia: Zemedelsko săyuzno izdatelstvo “Al. Stamboliyski,” 1947). From the historians, see Lyubomir Ognyanov, *Bălgarskiyat zemedelski naroden săyuz, 1899–1912* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. Kliment Ohridski,” 1990); John Bell, *Peasants in Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899–1923* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 22–54; John Bell, “The Genesis of Agrarianism in Bulgaria,” *Balkan Studies* 16, no. 2 (1975), 73–92.

of the peasants' interest in all places at all times," that is, "an educational-economic" and non-political organization.²¹ But BANU soon evolved into a political organization (at its Third Congress in 1901) and resolved to take part in elections, while many populists stood by their beliefs and left the Union. The populist ideal then remained only in literature (and Todor Vlaykov, a prominent populist writer, was very critical of BANU). In addition to the populist influence, there was a strong socialist influence from one of the founders of the organization, Tsanko Bakalov Tserkovski, who straddled his two loyalties for a time before deciding in favor of peasantism. The socialist influence is also visible in that the socialist Teacher's Union served as an inspiration for the peasant association. The socialists attempted to establish control over the peasant movement at its founding congress by pushing it in the direction of a professional organization of the peasants under their influence instead of an independent political organization. However, they failed.²²

The fact that universal (male) suffrage was introduced in Bulgaria with the establishment of the modern state by the liberal Tŕnovno constitution of 1878 (modeled on the Belgian constitution) proved of paramount importance for the early political mobilization of the peasantry and the growth of the political influence of its party. The Bulgarian agrarians—unlike the *narodniki* in Russia—were able to pursue their goals by democratic means, and not through social upheaval, because they worked in a comparatively liberal and democratic political framework, notwithstanding electoral fraud and the "personal regime" of Prince Ferdinand of Saxe Coburg-Gotha. Finally, one should note the authentically peasant character of BANU both in terms of its leaders and activists (among the peasant intelligentsia) and its supporters. The party preserved this character, at least until the ascent to power, by requiring peasant origins or residence in a village as a condition for membership. Until the Balkan Wars (1912–1913), BANU engaged mainly in propaganda, organization and the development of its ideology, while its representatives in the National Assembly were rather passive and disoriented.

²¹ About the influence of populism on the agrarians in particular, see John Bell, "Populism and Pragmatism: The BANU in Bulgarian Politics," in *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism, and Society*, ed. Joseph Held (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1996), 21–61, esp. 21–27.

²² About the attitude of the socialists, see Dimitŕ Dimov, *Tsanko Bakalov Tserkovski* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1968), esp. 79–128; Stefan Bochev, *Golemiyat bunt. Vŕznikvane na zemedelskoto dvizhenie v Bŕlgariya* (Sofia: Druzhestvo "Mir," 1993).

The agrarian ideology took shape gradually in newspaper articles and brochures written by its main ideologists, Dimităr Dragiev (1869–1943) and soon afterwards Aleksandăr Stamboliyski (1879–1923). First the “estatist theory” was elaborated (particularly by Stamboliyski), which argued for the significance of the peasants and the role of their organization.²³ It held that across Europe, the political parties and struggles had fulfilled their role by gaining civil and political rights from the monarchy and had outlived their usefulness. They were being replaced by economic competition between large occupational and professional groups (“estates”) with common economic interests, represented by their political-economic organizations. Apart from the peasants, such estates included the industrial workers, the artisans, traders and industrialists and the civil servants. But the peasant “estate” was by far the most numerous and also the most important and useful. Stamboliyski lauded it thus:

The peasant estate is a source, from which a chain of streams, rivers and seas are formed that are called “artisanal,” “commercial” and workers’ estates, and so on, but it remains inexhaustible and never dries up. Destined to be occupied with the most innocent, most virtuous, most blessed and most ennobling work and to produce the products most necessary for human life and for the life of every living creature in nature, the peasant estate has been and still remains the most important, most productive, most useful, massive and life-giving element in human society.²⁴

The estates of the artisans and of the industrial workers came next in importance in this hierarchy.

According to the agrarian leaders, the peasant estate was represented by BANU; the workers were represented by the socialist party; the artisans and civil servants were represented by their professional unions, and so on. Contemporary political life increasingly consisted of a struggle between these political-economic organizations in defense of the economic interests of the occupational groups they represent. When in parliament, the agrarians would supposedly enhance its power and curb the executive, though once he gained power, Stamboliyski did not establish professional chambers as the “estate” concept might have suggested. In describing the traditional Bulgarian bourgeois parties, he spared no epithets, calling them “spoils parties” (*kokalanski*), “job-hunting,” “predatory,” parasitical, “cliques of the court” and “coteries.” The “estate theory” and the concept

²³ Dimităr Dragiev, *Gde e spasenieto na bălgarskite zemedeltsi?* (Plovdiv, 1907), 97–105; Stamboliyski, *Političeski partii*.

²⁴ Stamboliyski, *Političeski partii*, 82.

of politics that accompanies it have caused many debates and critiques. The socialists in particular argued that the peasants were not a homogeneous "estate" or class but belonged to various classes. Others criticized the confrontation between "estates" (reminiscent of class struggles) and the antagonistic concept of politics behind it. It was also pointed out that a program of only one "estate" was too narrow and one-sided to provide a comprehensive governmental program.²⁵ What is important here is not the feasibility or desirability of the "estate theory" but the radical affirmation through it of the importance of the peasants and their interests, as well as BANU's claim of exclusive representation of the peasants in politics (parallel to the claim of socialists to represent the working class). In fact, the agrarians proved able to gain the exclusive allegiance of the Bulgarian peasantry (similar to the Croat Peasant Party and unlike the situation in Romania and Serbia). The Bulgarian peasantist leaders idealized the village and the peasant way of life, in sharp opposition to the cities,²⁶ and they were especially hostile towards certain social and professional groups, such as lawyers, intermediary traders, civil servants and army officers.

It is difficult to say from exactly what sources and to what extent Stamboliyski borrowed ideas, because references in his works are very scanty.²⁷ A number of arguments about the physical and moral superiority of the peasants and the peasant way of life and the negative influence of the cities on people's life seem to have been drawn from Jules Méline's work *Return to the Land* (published in 1905), from Emile Vandervelde, the social Darwinist Otto Ammon (cited explicitly) and the social Darwinist and neo-Kantian Ludwig Woltmann.²⁸ There were undoubtedly social Darwinist

²⁵ Todor Vlaykov, *Bălgarskiyat zemedelski sąyuz* (Sofia: n.p., 1914).

²⁶ Examples of idealizing the peasant world and contrasting it with the towns: Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, *Zemedelsko upravlenie: pârva godina* (Sofia: n.p., 1921), 151–154; Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, *Zemedelskite deytsi i tyahnoto izrazhdane* (Sofia: n.p., 1919), esp. 15–29. An extolling of peasant life also appears in Kiranov, *Bălgarskoto zemedelsko*, 143–149; Slavcho Drenovski, *Osnovi na zemedelskoto dvizhenie* (Sofia: n.p., 1924), 18–22.

²⁷ Stamboliyski studied agronomy in Munich and Halle in 1900–1902 but did not finish his studies because he fell ill with tuberculosis and returned to Bulgaria. Special studies of the influences upon him: Gennadii F. Matveev, "O nekotorykh istochnikakh ideologicheskoi kontseptsii A. Stamboliyskogo," *Izvestiya na bălgarskoto istoricheskoto družestvo*, vol. 39 (Sofia, 1987), 229–255; Nencho Dimov, "Aleksandăr Stamboliyski i selskite partii ot stranite na Yugoiztochna Evropa prez pârвите desetiletiya na XX vek," *Studia balcanica 19 (Iz istoriyata na sotstialnite dvizheniya na Balkanite v kraya na XIX i prez XX vek)* (Sofia: BAN, 1986), 203–246, esp. 206–208, 218–221.

²⁸ Jules Méline, *Le retour à la terre*; Emile Vandervelde, *L'exode rural et le retour aux champs* (Paris: Felix Alcan, 1903); Otto Ammon, *Die Gesellschaftsordnung und ihre*

influences on Stamboliyski, not only because of the social importance he attributes to biological instincts but because of his deeply felt understanding of life as a constant struggle and self-affirmation. In his theory of the instincts (for nourishment, self-preservation and procreation), as a driving force of social evolution Stamboliyski seems to have followed directly not the social Darwinist Herbert Spencer, but authors that aspired to a synthesis between anthropology, sociology and neo-Kantian philosophy, such as Lorenz von Stein, Otto Ammon and Ludwig Woltmann. Thus he recognized that other regulating factors of a legal nature were at work, moving in the direction of the neo-Kantians, such as Rudolf Stammler from the Marburg school. Most importantly, his ideas that estate struggles replace the class struggles and estate organizations supersede political parties are similar to the views of the neo-Hegelian professor from Leipzig University Paul Barth, Otto Ammon, and the Russian neo-Kantian Pavel Berlin (cited explicitly).²⁹ The French sociologist and theoretician of anarcho-syndicalism George Sorel also advocated the view that class interests are best defended by economic organizations—free associations (syndicates) of producers rather than by political parties. Stamboliyski's conviction that peasant (smallholder) agriculture was preferable to the big estates was reinforced by the German revisionist social democrats Eduard David, Bernstein, Hertz and Kautsky (whom he referred to in Principle 18 of the "Principles of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union").³⁰ Stamboliyski's critical views of capitalism and social inequality were probably formed—in addition to his life experiences—under the diffuse influence of social-reformist projects as well as "ethical socialism," with its rejection of large-scale capitalism and sympathy toward the small producers.

A fundamental element of the agrarian ideology in Bulgaria was the idea of "labor" (*trudova*) property, attributed to Stamboliyski's close associate

natürliche Grundlagen (Jena, 1896) (part of the book was translated into Bulgarian in 1911 under the title *Znachenie na selskoto sāslovie za dārzhavata i obshtestvoto*); Ludwig Woltmann, *Politische Anthropologie. Eine Untersuchung über den Einfluss der Deszendenztheorie auf die Lehre von der politischen Entwicklung der Völker* (Eisenach and Leipzig: Thüringische-Verlagsanstalt, 1903).

²⁹ Paul Barth, *Die Philosophie der Geschichte als Soziologie. Erster Teil: Einleitung und kritische Übersicht* (Leipzig: Reiland, 1915 [first published in 1897]); Pavel A. Berlin, *Politiesheskiya partii v Zapadnoi Evrope* (St. Petersburg, 1907).

³⁰ Eduard David, *Sozialismus und Landwirtschaft. Erster Band. Die Betriebsfrage* (Berlin: Verlag der Sozialistischen Monatshefte, 1903); Karl Kautsky, *Zemledelcheskiy vāpros* (Sofia, 1899). Other Bulgarian translations of his works on agriculture were *Zemedelcheska politika na sotsialnata demokratsiya* (Sofia, 1900); "Sotsializām i zemedelie," *Novo vreme* 7, no. 6 (1903), 486–498.

Rayko Daskalov.³¹ It affirms that land should belong to those who till it and limits the possession of land to the amount that can be cultivated with one's own (family) labor. Big land estates and the use of hired labor are rejected as socially unjust. As a minister of agriculture, Rayko Daskalov prepared the law for a land reform based on the idea of labor property (of a certain size). Moreover, the labor property and the "individualistic" social order based on it were praised as the best foundation and safeguard of political democracy—labor property was the basis of "labor democracy" praised as a society of social justice and humaneness.³² The idea of labor (land) property might sound akin to the ideas of the Russian Social Revolutionaries (*eseri*), heirs of the Populists (*narodniki*), because of the stress on the labor principle.³³ But it is not, because private property was affirmed while the *eseri* only recognized the "right of use."³⁴ This still may be a case of transfer and adaptation with a change of meaning. But apart from that, ideas that "the land belongs to those that till it" and that one should have no more than one can till were quite common in agrarian societies.³⁵ In fact, the idea of "labor property" did not sound as revolutionary in Bulgaria as in Romania, because this was more or less the existing and habitual condition (and the subsequent land reform did not have much private land to redistribute).

Cooperation was another magic word in agrarian ideology, as it seemed perfectly suited to a society of individual peasant smallholders. Initially, the (credit-type) cooperatives were encouraged by the state and played

³¹ Rayko Daskalov, *Borba za zemya* (Sofia, 1945; first published in 1923), esp. 9 ("The land should belong to those who till it. No one should possess more land than he can till himself with his family"). The author affirms that this idea occurred to him while in prison in 1916–1917, where he discussed it with his agrarian associates.

³² Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, "Printsipite na Bălgarskiya zemedelski naroden sŭyuz," in Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, *Izbrani proizvedeniya* (Sofia: BZNS, 1979; first published in 1919), 218–238, esp. 231–232, 235. On the inter-connectedness between the various elements of the agrarian ideology, see Stefan Radulov, "Ideynite osnovi na zemedelskiya rezhim," in *Nauchni trudove na Akademiyata za obshtestveni nauki i sotsialno upravlenie na Tsentralniya komitet na Bălgarskata komunisticheska partiya. Seriya Istoriya*, vol. 105 (Sofia, 1979), 7–76.

³³ Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes*, 10–14, 24–46. See the principal ideologist of the social revolutionaries, Viktor Chernov, *Konstruktivny sotsializm* (Prague: Volya Rossii, 1925), esp. 128–133, 277–310. The famous Russian agrarian economist Chayanov was also in favor of socialization of the land: Alexander Chayanov, "Chto takoe agrarny vopros?" in Alexander Chayanov, *Izbrannye proizvedeniya* (Moscow: Moskovskiy rabochiy, 1989; first published in 1917), 20–56.

³⁴ Todor Vlaykov, "Vărkhu zakona za trudovata pozemlena sobstvenost," in Todor Vlaykov, *Săchineniya na T. G. Vlaykov*, vol. 6 (Sofia, 1931, first published in 1923), 615–624.

³⁵ See Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 162–163.

a role in liberating the peasants from usury and debts. The cooperatives then came to be regarded as a means to compensate for the deficiencies of the small-size agricultural units and to assure agricultural progress. Cooperation was increasingly evoked as a panacea for all problems of backward agriculture. It was specifically promoted as a means for driving away commercial capitalism from agriculture, for instance, by making middlemen superfluous, so that the peasants could sell directly at better prices. Beyond agriculture, cooperatives had to be extended to trade, banking, insurance, and so on. Apart from the economic rationale, cooperativism came to embody the social idea of mutual help and trust. The idea was that it would harmonize private interest with public interest and would become a practical school for teaching democracy, social solidarity and humaneness.³⁶

Finally, the Bulgarian agrarians stood for democracy from the very beginning and increasingly emphasized the “rule of the people” (*narodovlastie*) when they assumed office. The concept of broadest and fullest “rule of the people” had a special politically populist ring and implied transcending the previous “bourgeois democracy,” namely, by being the most representative government because it was based on the most numerous estate (the peasantry), and by practicing various forms of “direct democracy” (initiative, referendum, the recall, extension of the election principle). The “rule of the people” corresponds with economic (labor) “democracy,” which serves as its stable basis. It also had to implement a wide social program: cheap and accessible courts, democratization of education, decentralization of healthcare, solving the housing question in the cities, and so on. In practice, the insistence on “rule of the people” in a country with 80 percent peasants meant “peasant democracy” and a “peasant state” governed by the peasant party as the only representative of the peasants. It thus presented an unusual vision of democracy as dictatorship of the (peasant) majority and contained the potential for degenerating into a dictatorship of BANU under a charismatic leader.

The Bulgarian Agrarian National Union ascended to power in the turbulent times after World War I, in which Bulgaria was among the losers—a second “national catastrophe” after the defeat in the Second Balkan War in 1913. In both cases BANU had taken a firm stand against the war and Stamboliyski had warned the monarch with harsh words, for which he

³⁶ Stamboliyski, *Printsipite na Bălgarskiya*, 233–234; Turlakov, *Istoriya, printsipi, taktika*, 152–153, 160, 164–165; Kiranov, *Bălgarskoto zemedelsko*, 63–64.

was imprisoned. Having first headed a spontaneous soldiers' uprising, which was crushed, BANU ascended to power through elections on a left-ist wave in the disarray and distress that followed the war.³⁷

The agrarian "regime" under Stamboliyski (1919–1923) carried out a number of reforms in almost every sphere—more than a hundred laws in just a few years.³⁸ This was accompanied by a still more radical anti-urban, anti-bourgeois, anti-capitalist phraseology. For instance, on one occasion Stamboliyski compared the capital city, Sofia, to Sodom and Gomorrah and threatened to raze it.³⁹ The celebrated agrarian reform, which affected some large estates and monasteries and caused considerable protest at the time, was actually very limited because of the quite egalitarian distribution of the land in Bulgaria and the small number of land estates. The agrarians just initiated it and it was continued with modifications by the subsequent governments (after returning the private lands) in order to supply the influx of war refugees with land that came from state and communal possessions. Other measures were the introduction of obligatory labor service, to teach the virtue of work (instead of military conscription, abolished by the Neuilly peace treaty), an educational reform, adding three more years to the mandatory primary education (known as "pro-gymnasium"), introduction of a progressive tax (which proved uncollectible because of bad techniques of assessment), the establishment of rural district courts with judges elected by the local population (and without defense lawyers) and of circuit justices of the peace, an attempt to introduce a state monopoly on the grain trade to eliminate speculation and benefit the peasants (abolished on the insistence of the victor states' Allied Commission) and promotion of the cooperatives. In spite of the agrarians' strong republicanism before and during the wars, the monarchy was preserved (King Ferdinand abdicated, and his young son Boris III assumed the throne).

It should be noted that Stamboliyski was proudly aware that BANU was experimenting with an agrarian "model" (*yurnek*) with international

³⁷ Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 85–153.

³⁸ On Agrarian rule, see Elena Statelova and Stoycho Grancharov, *Istoriya na nova Bălgariya, 1878–1944* (Sofia: Anubis, 1999), 356–399; Aleksandăr Velevev, *Glavni reformi na zemedelskoto pravitelstvo* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1977); Bell, *Peasants in Power*, 154–207. On the historiographical interpretations of the Agrarian rule, see Roumen Daskalov, *Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian History from Stambolov to Zhivkov* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 87–144.

³⁹ Strong statements against the cities appear in Stamboliyski, *Zemedelsko upravlenie*, 43–44, similarly 161, 163.

significance comparable (though not in size) with the Bolshevik revolution—a kind of “third way,” though he did not use the term. He was also aware that BANU was setting an example for other agrarian parties.⁴⁰ At the same time he became increasingly opposed to the Bolsheviks and regarded agrarian rule in Bulgaria as pre-empting a communist revolution (though this argument was intended partly to answer his bourgeois opponents’ charges that he was going too far).⁴¹

With its policies and, especially, its anti-urban rhetoric and hamhanded way of governing, BANU alienated and outraged the whole bourgeois establishment—among them the political parties (whose leaders were maltreated on one occasion and some put before a “people’s tribunal,” or extraordinary court, blamed for the defeat in the wars), the army officers decommissioned in compliance with the peace treaty, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (because of an agreement with Yugoslavia), the lawyers, the Church (for confiscating some of its property) and the academy (for infringing upon university autonomy). As a ruling party BANU was not exempt from the usual corruption, spoils politics and political partisanship. Moreover, it was plagued with incompetence because of its lack of administrative experience and of trained cadres, as well as the massive influx of office-seekers. The actual practice of the radical agrarian democracy amid the severe postwar economic crisis showed little concern for constitutionalism, the strict observance of the laws and respect for the political minority and weakened administrative rules and procedures.

The resistance of the bourgeois establishment and its parties and professional groups radicalized BANU and pushed it into the direction of a “peasant dictatorship,” as indicated by the creation of its own paramilitary “Orange Guard” and the setting up of a “committee for peasant dictatorship” by younger radical activists with Stamboliyski’s approval (a party congress voted a resolution for dictatorship if the need arose).⁴² Here we can see the unmistakable influence of the Bolshevik revolution, though not of the kind desired by the communists, that is, subordination of the peasants to a communist-led “united front,” but radicalism from the peasants themselves. The agrarians bypassed the state administrative machine

⁴⁰ Stamboliyski, *Zemedelsko upravlienie*, 10, 148, 150, 154.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 150–151, 159–160, 179.

⁴² See Mihail Genovski, *Aleksandăr Stamboliyski—otblizo i otdaleko* (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na BZNS, 1982), 136–137, 142–145. Also Stamboliyski, *Zemedelsko upravlienie*, 179. Stamboliyski threatened an “agrarian dictatorship” if his communist opponents resorted to violence.

in conducting some of their measures; they debased the rule of law and tended to place the party over the representative institutions, for instance, in the government's demagogical "accounting" before party forums or when the government handed its resignation to the party congress and asked for a renewal of confidence. There are indications that Stamboliyski planned some radical measures against big private capital, such as nationalization of the banks, "cooperativization" of big enterprises and the creation of state monopolies, and the fact that a new republican constitution was under preparation.⁴³ On the other hand, precisely because the agrarians remained committed to parliamentary democracy and because of the naiveté and the credulity of the peasant tribune, Stamboliyski, the regime fell as the result of a conspiracy.

BANU was overthrown through a military coup d'état on June 9, 1923, organized by a secret military organization (the Military League) and the political group National Concord (Naroden sgovor). The new regime, with Aleksandăr Tsankov as premier, unleashed a reign of terror against the agrarian leaders, many of whom were murdered (most notably Stamboliyski) or forced into emigration. The terror was also unleashed against the Communist Party, which staged an uprising on the orders of the Comintern in September 1923. Set on a revolutionary course, it attempted to kill off the political and military elite assembled at St. Nedelya Cathedral on April 16, 1925, by blowing up the building. Along with the decimation of the communists in revenge, this led to the destruction of the agrarian Left (including Petko D. Petkov, Dimităr Grăncharov and Nikolai Petrini). Under the new conditions the agrarians disintegrated into various fragments and groups of varying composition with leftist, centrist or rightist orientation inside the country or in emigration. The efforts of the international communist peasant organization (Krestintern), a creation of the Comintern, to induce agrarian émigrés and leftist agrarian groups into cooperation under the slogan of a "united worker-peasant front" (after 1935, the "people's front" against fascism) had little effect.⁴⁴

⁴³ See Genovski, *Aleksandăr Stamboliyski*, 144–147, 172–178, 218–219, 237–241, 444–445.

⁴⁴ Nencho Dimov, "Krestinternăt i selskite partii v stranite na Yugoiztochna Evropa, 1923–1929," in *Studia balcanica 17, Izsledvaniya v chest na akademik Nikolay Todorov* (Sofia: BAN, Institut za balkanistika, 1983), 240–253; Louisa Reviakina, "Kominternăt i selskoto dvizhenie v Bălgariya, 1923–1939," in *Bălgariya i Rusiya prez XX vek. Bălgaro-ruski nauchni diskusii*, ed. Vitka Toshkova (Sofia: Gutenberg, 2000), 68–78; Louisa Reviakina, *Kominternăt i selskite partii na Balkanite, 1923–1931* (Sofia: Akademichno izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov," 2003). See also Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, 100–102.

The centrist and the rightist factions gradually overcame the isolation and disarray and began to accommodate to the bourgeois establishment and collaborate with the traditional "bourgeois" political parties. These in turn were also interested in collaboration with the broadly based agrarians. A split of the reconstituted BANU at the end of 1926 and the beginning of 1927 produced a centrist Agrarian Union "Vrabcha 1" (so called after the location of its headquarters) around Dimităr Gichev and the right-wing BANU-"Orange" (after the color of the agrarian party banner) around Konstantin (Kosta) Tomov, Marko Turlakov and Hristo Manolov. In 1932 another agrarian party was formed by former émigré circles around Aleksandăr Obbov and Kosta Todorov—BANU "Aleksandăr Stamboliyski" ("Pladne"), which insisted on one-party agrarian rule. "Vrabcha 1" entered an election coalition and took part in a coalition government (the "People's Bloc") with other centrist parties in 1931, which was overthrown by another military coup d'état on May 19, 1934. This marked the beginning of authoritarian rule in Bulgaria, first by a military regime and then, starting in 1935, by a royal regime under King Boris III. A new phenomenon and a sign of agrarian decline was the fascization of some right-wing agrarians and the wooing of the peasants by extreme nationalist and fascist organizations in the 1930s, not without success. Nationalist and fascist organizations hailed the peasants as bearers of valuable national traits and the backbone of the nation (or the healthy racial stock). In 1933 K. Tomov and Georgi Markov and their followers, as well as some centrist agrarians (around Zahari Zhekov), joined the rising pro-fascist National Social Movement of Aleksandăr Tsankov.⁴⁵

The development of the agrarian ideology continued after 1923 through the 1930s. Bulgarian mainstream agrarianism gravitated to the political center rephrased as the "ideology of the middle classes" (peasant smallholders in the role of a middle or intermediary class), and there were signs of accommodation to the political establishment. Such was the emphasis on the intermediary and buffer role of the peasants between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, labor and capital. Likewise, some peasantist leaders claimed the agrarians served as a political center, a broker and conciliator mitigating the struggle between labor and capital. Participation in coalition governments was encouraged (instead of the previous insistence on one-party rule). Cooperation between the various "estates"

⁴⁵ Dimitrina Petrova, *Bălgarskiyat zemedelski naroden sąyuz, 1899–1944* (Sofia: Detelina, 1999), 129–207.

and harmonizing their interests were emphasized, though more with the working classes. The agrarian press made special efforts to reject charges that the agrarians were hostile to the cities and to present the relations between town and village as mutually beneficial and harmonious; the animosity toward the intelligentsia was also reappraised.⁴⁶ Agrarianism now shifted from a concern for the peasants toward facing the problems of modernization of the Bulgarian agriculture and the overcoming of its obvious deficiencies. At the same time the problems of the village were taken up by public figures and scholars outside the Agrarian Party milieu, which caused mixed feelings among party activists.⁴⁷ In the late 1920s, a group of agrarian economists and agronomists around Yanaki Mollov founded a nascent agrarian sociology in Bulgaria (not unlike the Romanian sociological institute of Dimitrie Gusti in Bucharest). The state itself became involved in the modernization of the village, as exemplified in the joint civil sector-state "Model Village" project (1937–1944) in collaboration with the American Near East Foundation and reminiscent of the Romanian "cultural hearths" (whose experience was also used).⁴⁸

A strong leftist ideological current emerged within Bulgarian agrarianism, which developed the cooperative idea (cooperativism) into a vision of a totally cooperative society (cooperative "order" and even a "cooperative state") as a new social and economic system that would be an alternative to both capitalism and Soviet-type communism.⁴⁹ This was elaborated by Mihail Genovski (in his works of 1925, 1934 and 1939) and a group of leftist

⁴⁶ For such a stand, the old agrarian leader Dimităr Dragiev, *Bălgarskiyat zemedelski naroden sąyuz* (Stara Zagora, 1926), 51–52, 57–62; Drenovski, *Osnovi na zemedelskoto*, 19, 26–29, 34, 70–73; Nedyalko Atanasov (pseudonym Petkanin), *Po trudniya păt. Bălgarski zemedelsi naroden sąyuz na vlast 1919–1923 g.*, vol. 2 (Sofia, 1931), 36–37; *Zemedelski kalendar za 1924 godina* (Tărnovo, 1923), 27–33; *Zemedelski naroden kalendar* (Sofia, 1930), 70–71. An in-depth view of the peasants as a "middle class" (participating in the production with both labor and capital) appears in Genovski, *Obshtestvenost i kultura*, 104–115.

⁴⁷ Mikhail Nichkov, *Istoricheskata rolya na zemedelskoto dvizhenie v Bălgariya* (Sofia, 1933), 40–59.

⁴⁸ Milena Angelova, "Obraztsovo selo." *Modernizatsionniyat proekt za seloto v Bălgariya (1937–1944)* (Blagoevgrad: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Neofit Rilski," 2008).

⁴⁹ Mihail Genovski, "Kooperativna dărzhava," in *Osnovi na zemedelskoto uchenie* (Plovdiv, 1934), 103–128. A thoroughly elaborated version appears in Genovski, *Obshtestvenost i kultura*, 148–152, 193–216. See also Nedyalko Atanasov (pseudonym Petkanin) *Zemedelski besedi. Misl i idei po printsipite i taktikata na Bălgarskiya zemedelski naroden sąyuz. Chitanka za sdruzhenite zemedeltsi* (Sofia, 1930), 13–16. Already in the 1940s there was Kănyu Kozhuharov, *Kooperatsiyata spored zemedelskata ideologiya* (Sofia: "Zemedelsko izdatelstvo "Al. Stamboliyski," 1947); Kănyu Kozhuharov, *Kapitalizăm i kooperatizăm pod svetlinata na zemedelskoto uchenie* (Sofia: Zemedelsko sąyuzno izdatelstvo "Al. Stamboliyski," 1945), 27–29.

agrarians around him associated since 1934 with the journal *Zemlya i trud* (Land and Labor). The cooperative order was portrayed as a just “society of labor” (*trudovo obshtestvo*), without exploitation or great social contrasts and inequalities. The leftist cooperative plans called for a thorough implementation of the cooperative principle in all economic spheres, along with the nationalization of some industries (finances, transport, some large enterprises of national importance) and a comprehensive plan. At the bottom of the cooperative pyramid—as the “cell” of the cooperative state—would be all-purpose cooperatives (for credit, supplies, production and insurance); at the same basic level would also be specialized producer cooperatives (*trudovo proizvoditelna*). In their extreme versions such projects resemble in many ways the later state socialism. Both called for the cooperative management of all sorts of activities (including in the cultural and social sphere), a bureaucratic organization with several levels and comprehensive plans; contrary to the agrarian claims, there hardly seems to be space for individual freedom and initiative. Some leftist agrarians even rejected private ownership of land and proposed to replace it with “property of use” (*vladeene za izpolzvane*) in a certain quantity, probably under the influence of the Russian social revolutionaries (*eseri*).⁵⁰

Two versions of cooperativism can be distinguished: a non-market cooperativism without market-commodity relations, at fixed prices and without profit, and a market-oriented version (especially with Koycho Aleksandrov),⁵¹ which envisions competition between the cooperatives and free private initiative (based on labor private property) and keeps the stimulus of profit in a free market economy, but without capitalist monopolies. A possible influence upon the “non-market” version of the cooperative society in particular is the views of the Russian Social Revolutionaries for the future “cooperative socialism” of autonomous producing units on a federative principle. Somewhat paradoxically, what started as a strictly individualistic agrarian ideology of smallholders ended up in the leftists’ visions in an almost socialist collectivist vision of practically mandatory association and regulation—a “cooperative state.”

⁵⁰ Slavi Pushkarov, “Zemlya i prirodni bogatstva,” in *Osnovi na zemedelskoto uchenie*, 75–85. On the other hand, unlike the Russian social revolutionaries, the proposed “property of use” lasts indefinitely and is inheritable (p. 83). On the views of the social revolutionaries, see Radkey, *The Agrarian Foes*, 10–14, 24–46; Chernov, *Konstruktivny sotsializm*, 128–133, 277–310.

⁵¹ Koycho Aleksandrov, “Spravedliva ikonomika,” *Zemlya i trud* 3, nos. 2–3 (1937), 40–45.

Agrarian cooperativism is an attempt to formulate a “third” (“middle”) or mixed model of socioeconomic development between liberal capitalism and Soviet-type communism (anticipating the postulate of a “non-capitalist way of development” in some developing countries of the 1950s). According to the economic historian Lyuben Berov, the Bulgarian agrarians were not influenced by parallel ideas about cooperativism as a “third way” in Serbia, Croatia and Romania. At the same time, leading Western European and American proponents of cooperativism appeared in numerous translations of books and articles, especially those by Bernard Lavergne, Charles Gides, Ernest Poisson, the American James Warbasse, the Russian Vahan Totomianz, Georges Lasserre and Louis de Brouckère.⁵² On the other hand, the peasantist cooperative ideas far exceed the understanding of cooperatives as a “corrective” of the capitalist system, a means to improve the situation of the workers or reduce consumption expenses for all (Charles Gides’s consumer cooperatism). What was expected from the cooperatives was no less than to replace capitalism as a system and become the basis of a new social order.

Ironically, cooperativism was more difficult to practice and remained weaker in less developed agricultural societies, because economically weak peasants found little basis for cooperation, while richer people took advantage of the cooperatives. Under such conditions cooperativism actually amounted to a certain crediting of agriculture through the Bulgarian agricultural state bank, which financed the cooperatives (and created tax privileges for them) without being able to retrieve the credits, and clientelistic redistribution of resources, but without much effect on productivity—a form of “communal capitalism” (as Roumen Avramov recently dubbed it).⁵³

The peasantist ideas of politics, such as “rule of the people” and etatism, were continued under the name “new people’s state.” According to this leftist concept, the bourgeois-democratic state had to be transformed into a “new people’s state” and totally democratized. The peasant “estate” was still accorded the primary role and was regarded as unitary and not divided into classes, but the working class and the other working people

⁵² Lyuben Berov, “Văzgleđi na levitsata na BZNS otosno oblika na bādesheto chove-shko obshtestvo, 1920–1939,” *Istoricheski pregled* 46, no. 3 (1990), 3–22, esp. 17, 20–21. See also a bibliography of the cooperative ideas in Bulgaria in *Stopanska i sotsialna knizhnina v Bālgariya. Bibliografiya na bālgarskite knigi i statii ot nachaloto do dnes, 1850–1945*, ed. Todor Vladigerov (Svishtov, 1948); Romyana Pesheva, *Kooperativno dvizhenie. Bibliografiya na knigi i statii, izdadeni v Bālgariya prez perioda 1852–1983* (Sofia: 1986).

⁵³ Roumen Avramov, *Stopanskiyat XX vek na Bālgariya* (Sofia: Tsentār za liberalni strategii, 2001), 26–30.

(*trudeshti se*), such as artisans and the self-employed, were granted equal participation in the building up and the government of the new state. Dictatorship of any type (including a peasant dictatorship) was rejected, and legality was affirmed. The state had to rest upon a cooperative economic basis and restrict capitalism and large-scale profits through price regulation and progressive income taxation.⁵⁴

During World War II one leftist Agrarian faction joined the Fatherland Front, formed by the Communist Party to broaden the resistance against the pro-German Bulgarian government, and took part in the government after the communist takeover on September 9, 1944. (Another faction had formed the last bourgeois cabinet, which lasted just one week.) The agrarians, with their strong grassroots organization, actually constituted the communists' main rivals in the postwar years. They were suppressed and their courageous leader, Nikola Petkov, was sentenced in a show trial and murdered in September 1947; the other major leader, Georgi M. Dimitrov, managed to escape to the United States. The communists preserved an emasculated branch of the Agrarian Party as a symbol of the "worker-peasant alliance" and the "united front" between communists and agrarians—a peculiarity of Bulgaria's communist system.

ROMANIAN AGRARIANISM

In Romania there existed a serious land and peasant question, which preceded the development of a peasant movement. The Romanian peasants, like Russian peasants, lived for the most part in serfdom and worked on the estates of big landowners (*boiers* or *boyars*) until they were emancipated in 1864.⁵⁵ Formally free, but land-hungry, they lapsed into a kind of semi-servitude maintained through a number of "feudal" arrangements, such as sharecropping (renting land against a share of the crops) and converting debts into labor dues. The agrarian reforms in 1864, 1872 and 1908 were subverted by the resistance of the big landowners and the bureaucracy to whom their implementation was entrusted. What prevailed was a combination of semi-feudal and capitalist forms of production and exploitation of labor, rightly characterized by the socialist Dobrogeanu-Gherea as *neoiobăgia* (neo-serfdom). Placed in abject conditions, the peasants

⁵⁴ Kănyu Kuzhuharov, *Dărzhavata spored zemedelskata ideologiya* (Sofia: Zemedelsko izdatelstvo "Al. Stamboliyski," 1946), esp. 55–89.

⁵⁵ Mitrany, *The Land and the Peasant*; Daniel Chirot, *Social Change in a Peripheral Society: The Creation of a Balkan Colony* (New York: Academic Press, 1976), 89–157.

resorted to spontaneous revolts, the last of which, in 1907, was suppressed with particular severity.⁵⁶ A radical agrarian reform was promised to the peasants during World War I; it was finally carried out by the Liberal Party after the war (1918–1921). It abolished the large estates and distributed most of the land to the peasants. The rationale of the reform was less economic than social and moral. Because of insufficient properties and still more due to the sizable compensation for the landlords and the absence of the necessary facilities (such as credit, cattle and farm equipment), it did not succeed in creating vigorous peasant agriculture. The resolution of the agrarian question was strongly influenced by the national question, since the Romanian ruling elites pursued policies of Romanianization and colonization in the newly acquired territories. Thus the agrarian reform in Transylvania and Dobrudja especially affected landowners of Hungarian, German and Bulgarian descent.

The Romanian agrarian movement was preceded and influenced by populist ideas to a much greater extent than the Bulgarian one.⁵⁷ The first more definite agrarian current was of a literary character—*Sămănătorism* (from *sămănător*, or sower)—at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century. The *Sămănătorists*, grouped around the weekly review *Sămănătorul*, idealized the village and thought that the peasants were above all in need of education. Their program aimed at the moral and cultural “uplifting” and “regeneration” of the village, without engaging with the Romanian peasants’ grave economic and social problems. As strong nationalists they favored social harmony and stood for “national ideals.” The major figure of *Sămănătorism*—the nationalist historian Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940, murdered by the fascist Iron Guard)—rejected the imitation of foreign models and was in favor of slow “organic” development, in keeping with the “national spirit.”⁵⁸ In his historical works he idealized the social-political system in medieval Moldavia and Wallachia as a rudimentary kind of democracy of a patriarchal peasant society, disregarding the domination by *boiers* and clergymen. In general Iorga regarded the village as the preserver of a valuable tradition and a place of natural and healthy organic growth. He vilified the city as a symbol of moral corruption and artificial experiments, of everything

⁵⁶ Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea, *Neoiobăgia. Studiu economico-sociologic al problemei noastre agrare* (Bucharest: Socec, 1910).

⁵⁷ Keith Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 67–71.

⁵⁸ About Nicolae Iorga, see John Campbell, “Nicholas Iorga,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 26, no. 66 (November 1947), 44–59.

wrong in the modern development of Romania. Although he accepted the development of industries based on agricultural products, he regarded Romania as basically agricultural and thought that it would remain so in the future, without seeing this as a sign of inferiority.

A more direct predecessor of Romanian peasantism was Poporanism (from *popor*, people)—the Romanian version of Russian *narodnichestvo*. In contrast to the Sămănători, the Poporanists were not content with appeals for educational and cultural improvement of the village but envisioned reforms and put forth economic and political objectives. The main theoretician of Poporanism, Constantin Stere (1865–1936), directly transferred Russian populism to Romania.⁵⁹ Stere was a Romanian born in Bessarabia (then part of Russia) and Russian citizen. He came under the influence of the populists as a lyceum student and was exiled to Siberia on suspicion of belonging to the organization Narodnaya volya (People's Will). On his return he emigrated to Romania in 1893 and settled in Iași, where he completed a law degree and was appointed professor of administrative and constitutional law in 1901. He became one of the leaders of the National Liberal Party and was elected rector of the University of Iași in 1913. After the wars he played a role in the National Peasant Party as well. Together with the literary critic Garabet Ibrăileanu, he founded in 1906 the monthly review *Viața românească* (Romanian Life), which became a prestigious cultural publication and a mouthpiece of Poporanist ideas. In a series of articles in 1907 and 1908, Stere conducted his famous debate with the Romanian social democrats under the title: "Social Democracy or Poporanism?"⁶⁰ He rejected the idea that every country had to follow the Western path of development, that is, of capitalist industrialism. He argued that Romania's future lay with agrarian development based on smallholder agriculture. He thought that large-scale industrialization was not only avoidable but was actually impossible for Romania because of the lack of indigenous capital for financing large-scale industry and the unavailability of foreign markets (the argument of the Russian *narodniki* V. Vorontsov and N. Danielson). He denied the applicability of Marxist political economy premised on industrialism as an adequate instrument

⁵⁹ Michael Kitch, "Constantin Stere and Rumanian Populism," *Slavonic and East European Review* 53, no. 131 (April 1975), 248–271; Henry Roberts, *Rumania: Political Problems of an Agrarian State* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1969), 142–147; Hitchens, *Rumania*, 71–75.

⁶⁰ Constantin Stere, "Social-demokratism sau poporanism?" *Viața românească* 2, no. 8 (1907), 328; no. 9 (1907), 327–334; no. 10 (1907), 17–18; *Viața românească* 3, no. 4 (1908), 59–60.

for analyzing Romania's agricultural society. One may note that a similar debate was held in Bulgaria in 1904–1905 between the founder of the Socialist Party Dimităr Blagoev and the populist Todor Vlaykov, a member of the Radical-Democratic Party, though Vlaykov was not explicit on the issue of the path of development.⁶¹

Stere elaborated peasantist ideas that regarded Romania as an essentially agrarian country and a “peasant society” that would not replicate Western development but steer an autonomous and “organic” course. Peasants were in his view a distinct social category, neither proletariat nor bourgeoisie, and they were the foundation of Romanian social structure, upon which the other classes were based:

The peasantry, as the undifferentiated base of society, constitutes a separate social category, upon whose back are raised all other social classes, not excepting even the industrial proletariat.⁶²

He viewed the village as a specific civilization—authentic and valuable—with roots in the past and part of Romanian “organic” development, in contrast with the artificial (and imported) urban civilization. The peasant is, in his romanticized view, a “whole man” with diverse skills and faculties, and an ideal man of the future, in contrast to the fragmented and specialized man of industrial society. This ideal he found embodied in the peasants of Transylvania as depicted in the poetry of George Coșbuc and Octavian Goga. Stere (like the Sămănătorists) felt some nostalgic regret at the passing of the traditional peasant world. At the same time he recognized that much of it was backward and obsolete and wanted to raise it to a modern level and adapt it to the modern world. There is an unmistakable note of “organic nationalism” in his stress on organic development and the fear of alien intrusions (such as capitalism and Jews), in his praise of the “national genius” embodied in the Romanian peasant, and his belief in Romania's destiny and mission. Still, he was moderate in comparison with the Sămănătorists and the xenophobic or chauvinistic views of the fascist Iron Guard.

For Stere, economic progress in Romania was possible only through a radical transformation of the agrarian sector. He believed in the inherent superiority of small and middle-size holdings over large estates (influenced

⁶¹ Todor Vlaykov, “Belezhki vărhu zemledelskiya vāpros,” *Demokraticheski pregled* 2, 1904, no. 20; 3, 1905, nos. 5–6, 112–117; nos. 11, 253–258; nos. 12–13, 277–285; nos. 14–15, 319–325; nos. 17–18, 384–388; Dimităr Blagoev, *Ikonomicheskoto razvitie na Bālgariya. Industriya ili zemedelie* (Varna, 1903).

⁶² Cited in Roberts, *Rumania*, 144.

by the German revisionists Friedrich Otto Hertz and Eduard David). His program for agrarian reform at the beginning of the twentieth century included the redistribution of the large estates among peasant proprietors (with compensation), promotion of village cooperatives, supported by credit institutions of the state and the spread of education, all leading to a vigorous and progressive peasantry. Industry was to have a subordinate and auxiliary role to agriculture. It was to take the form of cottage industries (household crafts) for agricultural products in the countryside (to occupy the peasants in winter), small capitalist enterprises in the towns, and state monopolies at a larger scale (protected from foreign capital) for processing natural resources and providing social services, such as transportation and communications. To quote him:

A free peasantry, master of its land; the development of crafts and small industries, with the aid of a forceful cooperative movement in the villages and the towns; and the state monopolization of large industries: this is the formula for our economic and social progress, which the very conditions of national life impose upon us.⁶³

Most importantly, he advocated transfer of political power to the peasantry and envisioned the establishment of a genuine “rural democracy” in Romania. This had to be done by full enfranchisement of the peasantry through reform of the electoral law (abolition of electoral qualifications and electoral colleges), reduction of centralization and the strengthening of local self-government. His vision of “peasant democracy” (and that of the Poporanists in general) was a harmonious society different from both capitalism and socialism, based on an economy dominated by small independent holdings and run according to its own categories and values; the peasant was the prototype of the “ideal man” of the future.

On the question of how to implement these ideas—that is, political strategy—Stere was strictly reformist and legalistic, not revolutionary. He was afraid that a domestic upheaval might invite foreign intervention, especially by Russia, and jeopardize national independence. To quote him:

Romania does not have the means for a class struggle. Germany can afford to be divided into antagonistic classes in a state of struggle between themselves, because its existence as a state is not thereby threatened. But the structure of Romania is weak. It cannot afford to throw itself into a class struggle. We must place the interests of our country above everything else.⁶⁴

⁶³ Cited in Kitch, “Constantin Stere,” 262–263.

⁶⁴ Catherine Durandin, *Istoria românilor* (Iași: Institutul European, 1998), 146.

Stere relied on the good will of the Romanian elites, whether intellectuals (whom he trusted with special responsibility in a truly populist manner), enlightened gentry or the bourgeoisie. But he was skeptical about the capacity of the peasantry itself—then reduced to semi-servitude—to undertake conscious and organized action. On this he differed sharply from the later peasantists, whose views were formed in the very different circumstances that followed the agrarian reform.

Compared to the Russian *narodniki* Stere was less of a socialist and more of a nationalist and thus served as a bridge between populism (which was committed to a socialist transformation of society) and “peasantism” (which was equivocal or negative on this issue). From the Russian populists he took the doctrine of a “separate path,” which he revised in accordance with the structure of Romanian society. This doctrine originated with the Slavophile idea of Russia’s unique destiny and the role of the Russian commune (*mir*). But it was actually developed by Herzen and Chernyshevsky and grounded in economic analysis by V. Vorontsov and N. Danielson, who argued that Russia could avoid state-sponsored capitalism and take a different course of development based on the popular (peasant) sector of the economy. Stere gave the doctrine of the “separate path” another interpretation, where the original distinction between “popular” (implicitly meaning: socialist) and “capitalist” mode of production was replaced by agriculture and industry (with no reference to modes of production). The Romanian “separate path” thus refers to a primarily agricultural development (not industrialization), but it does not preclude the development of capitalism even in the agricultural sector. Unlike the Russian populists, Stere did not think of adapting inherited rural communitarian institutions (in fact, there were none in Romania) to the needs of the future society and did not attempt to demonstrate that Romania’s development would end in socialism. He asserted that peasants should have property rights over their land (not public or communal ownership) and left room for “small capitalist enterprises” in the industrial sector. His political ideals for a peasant democracy also did not go beyond “bourgeois democracy,” and he was a “constitutional (or legal) populist,” that is, in favor of legal (not revolutionary) action and evolutionary development.⁶⁵

Stere has recently been claimed (by Manuela Boatcă and Joseph Lowe) as a precursor of the Latin American dependency school and of the world-systems theory (of Immanuel Wallerstein). The argument is as follows.

⁶⁵ Ionescu, “Eastern Europe,” 98–106.

From a peripheral position he was able to critique the dominant liberal and socialist ideologies, which shared a unilineal theory of development based on industrial capitalism and Westernization and envisioned an alternative (“diachronic”) path of development for the peripheries. It was based on exploring indigenous potential by encouraging small-scale peasant property as the basis of development and limited industrialization. In addition, although he was primarily interested in Romania, he developed valuable notions for the analysis of center-periphery relations within the encompassing unity of the “world system,” such as vagabond capital (coming from the advanced countries to the underdeveloped ones only to exploit them), proletarianization of the entire workforce in underdeveloped societies—a “proletarian nation” (alongside the “bourgeoisification” of the proletariat in the developed societies), hence class struggle as a national struggle against vagabond capital and its local agents instead of a struggle between classes in the underdeveloped countries, and still less so in the advanced ones, where class conflict is actually reduced. Stere was grossly misinterpreted by his Marxist opponents, who said he was taking an anti-industrialist and anti-capitalist stance and opting out of the capitalist world economy. In fact, his ideas, especially on agricultural cooperatives (“a corporative system of agriculture”), “did not represent an alternative to a capitalist economy, but a capitalist alternative to industrialized economies,” as later corporatist economists would recognize (like the Romanian Mihail Manoilescu and subsequently the Prebisch-Cepal school).⁶⁶

The National Peasant Party was created in 1926 by a merger of the Peasant (Țărănist, from *țăran*, peasant) Party of the Old Kingdom and the Romanian National Party of Transylvania. The origins and characteristics of these parties were quite different. The Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom was formed at the end of World War I (late 1918) after an unsuccessful precedent in the 1890s by Dobrescu-Argeș. In 1919 a Bessarabian peasant party with a radical leftist orientation emerged in Bessarabia. In 1921 the two merged into the Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom, but the

⁶⁶ Manuela Boatcă, “Peripheral Solutions to Peripheral Development: The Case of Early 20th Century Romania,” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 11, no. 1 (2005), 3–26, esp. 14–24, cit. on 22. This is because agricultural cooperatives (as a corporate form) are a way of linking agricultural produce directly to the capitalist market without exposing it to fiscal exploitation by the credit system and the commercial apparatus. See also Joseph Love, “Theorizing Underdevelopment: Latin America and Romania, 1860–1950,” *Estudos avançados* 4, no. 8 (1990), also available at <http://www.scielo.br/scielo> (accessed August 28, 2011).

Bessarabian organization retained some autonomy. The principal figures were Ion Mihalache (former teacher), Constantin Stere, Dr. Nicolae Lupu (a country doctor), P. Halippa (former Russian social-revolutionary) and Virgil Madgearu. Although only Mihalache was of peasant origin, this party started as a radical agrarian movement, not shunning the designation of a "class party" (dropped from the party program upon the merger in 1926). The Romanian National Peasant Party of Transylvania originated at the end of the nineteenth century as an advocate in the Hungarian parliament of the interests of Transylvanian Romanians against Magyarization. Thus by the time Greater Romania was formed, it had parliamentary experience. Its main leaders were Iuliu Maniu and the ardent nationalist Alexandru Vaida Voevod. Though the party was primarily a defender of the Romanian peasants against the Magyar overlords, it also represented Romanian intellectuals, professionals and traders. It was more nationalist than peasantist in outlook, and its leaders were middle-class. The National Peasant (Țărănist) Party that resulted from the merger with Mihalache and Maniu as leaders moved more to the right than the previous Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom. A comparison of the series of Peasant Party programs (1921, 1922, 1924, 1926) shows an evolution from a radical agrarian policy of land distribution and family-cultivated plots toward a more elastic concept emphasizing improvement of production; this evolution was taking place even before the merger and was accentuated afterwards, especially when the National Peasants came to power. Also noteworthy is a drift away from (Stere's) populism with its peasant romanticism ("mystique"), distrust of industry and opposition to the West toward more pragmatic attitudes. Stere himself was removed from the party leadership due to (dubious) allegations of collaborationism during World War I.⁶⁷

In contrast to Stamboliyski's agrarians, the Romanian peasantists, even though they represented the interests of the peasants, did not present their party as a peasant class organization and were careful not to identify too strongly with the village against the town and agriculture against industry. At the same time they had to distance themselves from the "social harmony" demagoguery of the established parties. To quote Madgearu:

⁶⁷ Roberts, *Rumania*, 139–142, 153–156; Hitchins, *Rumania*, 391–395; Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, 237–245; Rudolf Liess, "Rumänische Bauernparteien," in *Europäische Bauernparteien*, 437–465, esp. 437–439. See also, from a communist point of view, Solomon Timov (pseudonym of S. Tinkelman), *Agrarny vopros i krest'ianskoe dvizhenie v Rumynii. Antineoiobăgia* (Moscow: Verlag des internationalen Agrarinstitutes, 1928), 230–265.

Though the peasant doctrine admits that the basis of its policy is class-focused, its concept of human society is not class-based and its ideas are less class-based than those of any other party. The other parties label themselves “socially harmonious,” taking pride in themselves as national, fusing in their concerns the interests of all citizens. The peasant doctrine knows that they are, in reality, class-based parties, and, if it opposes them, it is precisely out of national necessity, in order to ensure the normal social development of the people.⁶⁸

In fact, the question of the Agrarian Party’s class character divided the Romanian peasantist leaders (Ion Mihalache and Virgil Madgearu) and the Bulgarian leader Stamboliyski during their talks at the beginning of 1921, when Stamboliyski visited Romania.⁶⁹

Peasantism (țărănismul), the ideology of the Peasant Party, differed significantly from populism, despite the common themes and Stere’s affiliation with the Peasant Party.⁷⁰ As a Peasant Party deputy expressed in a 1920 statement: “We are not against industry, and not against towns, not against ‘foreigners’ and have nothing in common with the populism of *Viața românească*.”⁷¹ The principal ideologists of peasantism were Ion Mihalache and especially Virgil Madgearu (though there were many others). Mihalache (1882–1963), a former teacher of peasant origin, was an authentic peasant and exhibited a pragmatic attitude. In his parliamentary speeches in 1920 and 1921, he attacked the existing order and the ruling classes and did not believe that the old parties would defend the interests of the peasants. He was convinced that the peasants had to organize in their own defense and lead a (class) struggle—he did not shrink from calling it that—and not succumb to appeals to “social harmony,” which were actually a pretext to protect the interests of the ruling class. Yet he did not regard the peasantry as an exclusive “messianic” class and (unlike the socialists) did not dispute the legitimacy of the other social classes, including the bourgeoisie. His strongest and most urgent concern was with solving the agrarian question, namely the redistribution of agricultural land and the setting up of small peasant farms (which he believed were more efficient than the big estates), and with promoting peasant

⁶⁸ Virgil Madgearu, “Tărănismul” (published in 1921) in Vasile Niculae, Ion Ilincioiu and Stelian Neagoe, *Doctrina țărănistă în România. Antologie de texte* (Bucharest: Editura Noua Alternativă. Social Theory Institute of the Romanian Academy, 1994), 96.

⁶⁹ Dimov, “Aleksandăr Stamboliyski i selskite,” 233 (citing *Zemедельско зname*, no. 97, January 27, 1921).

⁷⁰ Roberts, *Rumania*, 147–153; Hitchins, *Rumania*, 319–334.

⁷¹ Cited in Roberts, *Rumania*, 148.

cooperatives. He defined small property as the area of arable land that could be cultivated by one peasant family with occasional support from other peasants, but without hired labor (a concept that closely parallels the “labor property” of the Bulgarian peasantist leader Rayko Daskalov). Thus he shared the typical peasantist ideal of an agricultural regime based on small independent (family) holdings, believing that it was both the most productive and socially just, because the peasant proprietor would keep the rewards of his own labor. As for industry, he did not share Stere’s view that Romania would follow a different course of development from the West and even conceded that mechanization and capitalism would come eventually to the countryside and undermine small peasant property. Yet for him this was an issue for the far future, not a concern of the present. For the present he assigned industry a supporting role to agriculture. Otherwise he was nationally minded, but not an “organic nationalist,” and a monarchist.

The economist Virgil Madgearu (1887–1940), who earned a doctorate in economic theory from the University of Leipzig, was the foremost authority on the economic doctrine and ideology of Romanian peasantism. He outlined them in a series of articles and books, published in the 1920s and the 1930s. Like all peasantists (in contrast to orthodox Marxism) he maintained that the trend in agriculture was developing from large estates to small peasant holdings, which he believed were more productive. In fact, the whole peasantist economic and social doctrine is premised upon the viability (and the advantages) of the small peasant holding, and so is the political doctrine of the peasant state. Madgearu’s ideas about the viability and the unique qualities of the small peasant holding were influenced by Stere, but especially by the theory of the Russian agrarian economist Alexander Chayanov.⁷² Following Chayanov, Madgearu argued that there was a qualitative difference between the family peasant agriculture and the large-scale capitalist agrarian enterprise. The former was not capitalist and was guided not by the profit motive but by the satisfaction of domestic needs; the economic activity of the family holding was determined by the number of household members, their age, and so on. Though capitalism dominated the world economy, peasant agriculture coexisted parallel to it as a separate and specific mode of production with its own psychology

⁷² Alexander Chayanov, *Die Lehre von der bauerlichen Wirtschaft*, 1923; Alexander Chayanov, *The Theory of Peasant Economy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986).

and idea of work and gain. Moreover, by comparing agricultural to industrial production, Madgearu pointed out that concentrating productive forces in great enterprises was not feasible in agriculture, and hence capitalism would not develop there (and thus Romania would not follow the Western pattern). As a matter of fact, Chayanov had demonstrated the extraordinary ability of the peasants to survive under adverse conditions, but not that the traditional peasant subsistence economy had potential and could generate economic growth.⁷³ Madgearu, however, believed that the peasantist “third way” between capitalism and socialism had to lean precisely on this type of economy. He found additional arguments in favor of the superiority of the peasant smallholder in his ability to perform multiple tasks, to reduce expenses, and the degree of self-sufficiency, which helped him better withstand the economic depression. In the wake of the postwar agrarian reforms, as a result of which Romanian agriculture was “peasantized,” he was certain that the era of the peasantry had come.

During the 1920s Madgearu opposed the policies of development of large-scale industry and capitalism in Romania. In his view its previous development had been “abnormal.” He thought that Romania had not evolved an authentic bourgeoisie in the Western sense but an economic and political oligarchy that sought to retain the existing structures and to foster alongside them an artificially supported industry to supplement its incomes instead of abolishing agrarian “feudalism” and releasing the forces of agricultural progress. That is why he believed the political and legal structure created by the oligarchy did not correspond to the economic and social realities in Romania. He acknowledged the contribution of the social democrat Constantin Dobrogeanu-Gherea in revealing the fundamental contradiction between the political and legal institutions of a Western bourgeois society and the backward agrarian economic structure of neo-serfdom (*neoiobăgia*).

Madgearu saw clearly the poverty of the Romanian peasants and the inadequacy of the allotted land to sustain a normal household, with consequences such as undernourishment and poor sanitation and housing. But like all peasantists he placed great hopes on the cooperatives overcoming the deficiencies of peasant agriculture and modernizing it while preserving the non-capitalist mode of production. He understood the cooperative as an association for mutual assistance and income from labor without the idea of profit. The cooperatives, he believed, would allow the peasants to

⁷³ Harre, “Between Marxism,” 71.

escape the increasing control of the capitalist trade and credit over agricultural production and to take these in their own hands. At the same time he was dissatisfied with the actual state of the cooperative movement. He recognized that capitalism had penetrated agriculture through credit and commerce (though according to him it had not changed the peasants' mode of production) but hoped that the cooperatives could prevail.

Madgearu envisioned a "peasant state" as the political structure of a peasant agrarianism that would represent the interests of the peasantry and differ both from the bourgeois and the socialist political structures. He firmly advocated parliamentary democracy as a political form, based on the freely expressed will of the majority and on a truly representative national assembly that would also be able to prevent the oligarchy from misusing democratic processes. He never lost faith in democracy and never moved toward dictatorship. But he was critical of Western bourgeois "individualist" democracy for being based on economic and social inequality and on rights without responsibilities. The rural democracy he envisioned would be better at providing equal opportunities and social justice and demanding social responsibility. To allow the peasants to gain political experience, he proposed reform of the local self-government to increase civic participation in public affairs. He rejected abrupt and violent change and "social catastrophes" in favor of gradual "organic" development.

Madgearu had a broader view of the economy and the interaction of agriculture and industry. He was not opposed in principle to the development of industry but was against "artificial" industries. To quote him:

The peasantry forms the most numerous strata of consumers. It is therefore directly interested in the industrial regime. Understanding the necessity of encouraging the progress of a national industry, it cannot admit a protection based on a prohibitive tariff system, which artificially maintains certain industries that lack any favorable conditions for their development.⁷⁴

He believed that in time a prosperous countryside would create the internal market needed for the development of a strong industry for various goods.

The National Peasant Party ascended to power after a sweeping electoral victory in the only free and fair election of the period and governed from November 1928 to October 1930.⁷⁵ However, despite all hopes its

⁷⁴ Cited in Roberts, *Rumania*, 151.

⁷⁵ Roberts, *Rumania*, 130–139, 156–169, 173–176, 191–192; Hitchins, *Rumania*, 368–374, 501–547; Stephen Fischer-Galați, *Twentieth Century Rumania* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1970), 29–69.

rule was a disappointment and a failure due to a number of unfortunate circumstances, primarily the Great Depression, which subverted the economic program of the party and undermined its popularity. A review of the policies implemented by the National Peasant Party reveals: no further redistribution of land and orientation toward a "process of selection" of prosperous holdings instead; inability to help the cooperative movement because of a lack of funds during the Depression; a more appropriate tariff policy of reducing tariffs on agricultural machinery and articles of mass consumption that benefited the peasants (reversing the policy of the Liberals); an open attitude towards foreign capital and international trade (which was at odds with, and actually more liberal than, the Liberals' position).

The National Peasant government was actually not very "peasantist" in its composition and policies. It certainly regarded itself as representative of the peasantry and had an agrarian program, but as it evolved its avowed peasantism was diluted, and it became more of a middle-class party basically concerned with political democracy and pursuing liberal capitalist policies of "trust-busting" (that is, free competition, but intervention by the state to prevent monopolies). Its pragmatic adaptation and accommodation to the bourgeois establishment differed markedly from the gradual left-wing radicalization of Stamboliyski's government. Premier Maniu's conflict with King Carol II, whom he helped return from exile, over the king's relations with mistress Madame Lupescu, finally led to Maniu's not-quite-justified removal from power. The failure of the National Peasant Party marked the failure of peasant democracy and the end of Romanian democracy for a long time. In fact, the party's very attachment to constitutional and legal principles exposed it to Carol's machinations, and the rising anti-parliament movements of the 1930s also contributed to the decline of the peasantists.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the National Peasant Party drifted even further from its rural origins and peasantist ideology. The National Peasant Party also suffered from internal weaknesses and lacked the strength to oppose rightist forces and doctrines, which claimed some of its electorate. The party was called to office by Carol II once more (1932–1933) under the ultra-nationalist Vaida Voevod. Voevod acted more like the Liberals in crushing workers' strikes, dissolving "anti-state" organizations and sympathizing with the nationalist goals of the Iron Guard. Thus he alienated the democratic majority of the party. Vaida broke with the Peasant Party over the introduction of a "numerus Valachicus" (a law to reduce the number of Jews and Hungarians in positions of government, in important enterprises,

and the professions) and formed his own ultra-nationalist semi-fascist faction (the Romanian Front).⁷⁶ An agreement was made between Maniu and the Iron Guard (and the Liberals of Gheorghe Brătianu) to ensure free elections in 1937. Though successful in its aim, the agreement left democratically minded people demoralized and indicated that the National Peasant Party had lost confidence in itself.

The peasantist ideology also evolved throughout the 1930s, especially Madgearu's views on Romania's economic development.⁷⁷ As mentioned earlier, initially he did not believe development of strong industry was possible in Romania. But under the impact of the 1929–1933 Great Depression, he revised his views and had to admit that the only solution for the agricultural states was to diversify their economies. This inference was reinforced by the autarkic tendencies in the Western European states, which increased their own agricultural production and diminished their imports from Eastern Europe, and by Germany's expansionism toward Eastern Europe. Thus he became convinced of the necessity for Romania to industrialize, starting with processing agricultural products and raw materials. Later on he even came to embrace the view of "forced industrialization" in order to reduce dependence on the international market and argued it was a "natural phenomenon." His views were endorsed by the National Peasant Party in 1935. Madgearu ascribed to the state a key role in the agrarian sector and in industrialization and increasingly advocated state planning and coordination, so-called *dirijism* (directed economy). He recognized the complexity of the tasks but was convinced that the age of economic liberalism had passed. In his last great work, published in 1940 (*The Evolution of the Rumanian Economy after the World War*), Madgearu reviewed the development of the interwar period. He did not see a structural change in the Romanian economy: the capitalist sector was still small and confined to a few industries; agriculture remained the most dominant by far, and its structure was determined by millions of peasant small holdings run in a non-capitalist way according to their own rules. Thus Romania was still not integrated into the world capitalist system. But he was compelled to admit that capitalism exerted a mighty influence on Romanian agriculture and had penetrated the mechanism of distribution, subordinating the peasant holdings to the capitalist market. Still, he denied that it had transformed the mode of production of the

⁷⁶ Roberts, *Rumania*, 173–175, 190–193.

⁷⁷ Hitchins, *Rumania*, 331–334.

peasant holdings. Madgearu did not change his democratic convictions: to the end, he remained a staunch advocate of parliamentary democracy and rule of law.

Within the Romanian peasant movement, right-wing and left-wing currents appeared. The rightists were ultra-nationalist and even pro-fascist. The Romanian peasantists generally operated in the strongly nationalist political milieu of successfully unified Greater Romania, which inclined even the moderate mainstream towards nationalism and a certain distrust of minorities (if not Stere's anti-Semitism), and this was even more true for the right wing in its competition with the fascist currents. In fact, the view of the peasants as "national capital" or the purest embodiment of the nation indicates in itself a deeply ingrained nationalism. Quite tellingly, the concept of a "national peasant state," though a component of the "third way" (along with cooperativism), acquired a nationalist ring, as in this passage by Ion Mihalache:

It will come here, on the ruins of capitalism and liberalism, a new form of state, friendly to the Romanian worker, who is the peasant. It will be the national peasant state! The character of this state will be "Romanian national," thus "peasant." ... For us "social" is "peasant" and "national" also "peasant." For us, peasant means nation, people, and country. To be peasant means to be, from birth, nationalist.⁷⁸

A leftist current also appeared, represented by Mihai Ralea, Gromoslav Mladenatz, Gheorghe Zane, Victor Jinga, Gheorghe Dragoș and others. As elsewhere, it was associated with the ideas of an agrarian "third way" (rejecting both capitalism and Bolshevism), and pervasive cooperativism, to be realized in a "peasant state." To quote Victor Jinga: "Capitalism and communism are the two paths the world economy will inevitably follow. We assert that cooperation as a third way is the most suitable for humankind," and "If one says 'peasantist state,' it automatically implies the cooperativist state."⁷⁹ Characteristically, the theoretician of the cooperatives, Gromoslav Mladenatz, criticized the mainstream Western authorities for overemphasizing the urban consumer cooperatives and neglecting the

⁷⁸ Ion Mihalache, *Țărănism și naționalism* (Bucharest: Institute for Graphic Arts "Bucovina" I.E. Toroutiu, 1936), 7–9. Cited in Liviu Neagoe, "The 'Third Way': Agrarianism and Intellectual Debates in Interwar Romania" (thesis submitted to Central European University, Department of History, Budapest, 2008), 39–40.

⁷⁹ Victor Jinga, *Dinamica economiei co-operativiste* (Brașov: Astra, 1941), 151–152. Cited in Vasile Dobrescu, "Between Idealism and Pure Reality: Peasantist Economic Doctrine," *Yearbook of the "Gheorghe Șincai" Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities of the Romanian Academy*, no. 7 (2004), 304. The paper deals with the leftist current in Romania.

rural cooperatives (of mixed—producing and consumer—nature) in their “cooperative republic.” Conversely, referring to George Sorel, Mladenatz regarded the agricultural cooperatives as the cooperative form that realized the cooperative idea most completely, especially regarding the social principle of repartition of rewards according to the participation in the realization of the product, thus placing the premium on labor.⁸⁰ In Transylvania in 1933, local lawyer Petru Groza created a small leftist agrarian organization called the Ploughmen Front, which would collaborate with the communists after World War II and enter their government.

Initially the National Peasants viewed the Green International in Prague with some suspicion as a “pan-Slav” organization. Nevertheless, in 1926 they joined it (the Bureau was formally constituted in 1928) but were not particularly active in or influenced by it. They categorically rejected any cooperation with the Krestintern (Red Peasant International), which they considered (not unjustly) to be an instrument of Soviet interference in Romanian domestic affairs.⁸¹

King Carol II established a dictatorship in 1938, which lasted until the disintegration of Greater Romania and his abdication in January 1940. One more time, and most dramatically, the National Peasants emerged as the major democratic opposition (along with the Liberals) to the communist regime after the war and became its victims. After a show trial, Maniu and Mihalache were sentenced to life imprisonment (and died in prison).

CROATIAN AGRARIANISM

The Croatian peasant movement emerged at the end of the nineteenth century in the context of the Habsburg Empire. The Croatian lands were divided into several administrative units, with Croatia-Slavonia as a separate political unit within the Kingdom of Hungary, ruled by an appointed *ban* (viceroy) and elected Assembly (Sabor).⁸² The Croats were mostly peasants with a certain landowning aristocracy, which cooperated with the Hungarian one, and a growing bourgeoisie. Land estates (*latifundia*)

⁸⁰ See Gromoslav Mladenatz, *Histoire de doctrines coopératives* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1933), 240–250. Mladenatz was professor at the Academy for Higher Commercial Sciences in Bucharest.

⁸¹ Kurt Treptow, “Populism and Twentieth Century Romanian Politics,” in *Populism in Eastern Europe: Racism, Nationalism, and Society*, 197–218, esp. 200–203; Roberts, *Rumania*, 163–164. See also the characteristics of peasantism from a communist point of view in Timov, *Agrarny vopros*, 240–248.

⁸² Mark Biondich, *Stjepan Radić, the Croat Peasant Party, and the Politics of Mass Mobilization, 1904–1928* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 3–26.

of Hungarian, Croatian and Austrian magnates made up about one-fourth of the land under cultivation in Croatia. The 1890s witnessed growth in Croatian agriculture and increased orientation toward the market, accompanied by the rise of a well-to-do peasantry. Yet the urban-rural or bourgeois-peasant divide characteristic of agrarian societies was very pronounced. The peasants were looked down upon by the urban elites (bureaucrats, educated people—intelligentsia). In turn they despised the urban dwellers, whom they stereotyped as *kaputaši* (from *kaput*, city overcoat), and were alienated from the exploitative state. To quote the would-be peasant leader Stjepan Radić (in 1896):

In Croatia even a foreigner notices at first glance that there are two peoples here: the gentlemen and the common people... Everyone who wears a black coat has the right to the title "gentleman," and only with this title can one in practice, in life, have any worth as a man. All the others are... peasants, "thick-headed," "cattle," "vulgar people," or simply slaves, subjects. Neither the property, nor the personal honor, nor the individual freedom of any man from among the common people is secure.⁸³

Local self-government (the Croatian Sabor) was run by the big landowners and civil servants, while the peasants were hardly represented because of census and indirect electoral procedures. The main Croatian political parties in the Hungarian parliament—the Independent People's Party (Narodna stranka) and the Party of Rights (Stranka prava)—were nationalist bourgeois parties in opposition to Hungarian rule, demanding wider autonomy for Croatia based on Croat historical "state right." At the end of the nineteenth century, a left-liberal current (the "progressists") emerged among Croatian youth (*mladi*) studying in Prague under the influence of Tomáš Masaryk. The progressists espoused democratic ideas as well as the Yugoslav idea, that is, close cooperation between Croats, Slovenes and Serbs against Austro-Hungarian rule with the goal of creating a Yugoslav (that is, South-Slav) state. They evolved into the Croat People's Progressive Party, which entered a coalition with the party of the Habsburg Serbs (the Serb Independent Party) in 1905.

The Croatian peasant movement was initiated by the Radić brothers (henceforth "Radići"), intellectuals of peasant origin.⁸⁴ Antun Radić

⁸³ Cited in Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 62.

⁸⁴ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 27–119 (until the war); Vladimir I. Freidzon, "Sotsial'no-politicheskie vzglyady Antuna i Stjepana Radichei v 1900–h gg. i vozniknovenie Horvatskoi Krest'yanskoi partii, 1904–1905," *Uchenye zapiski Instituta Slavyanovedeniya*, vol. 20 (1960), 275–305; Andreas Moritsch, "Die Bauernpartien bei den Kroaten, Serben und Slowenen," in *Europäische Bauernpartien*, 359–402, esp. 366–388. See also Petar Preradović, *Die Kroaten*

(1868–1919) was the ideologue, known for his calm and sedate temperament. Stjepan Radić (1871–1928) was the organizer and leader—hot-tempered and (according to some) erratic. Antun pursued Slavic studies in Zagreb and Vienna and was influenced by the Russian *narodniki* (populists). Stjepan attended the University of Zagreb and the University of Prague and graduated from the École Libre des Sciences Politiques (Free School of Political Science), known as “Sciences Po,” in Paris. He was often in conflict with the authorities because of his strong sense of justice and crusading spirit, neither of which was reduced by his physical limitations (he was half-blind). While in Prague he co-founded the journal *Croatian Thought* (Hrvatska misao) in 1897 and was member of the circle Progressive Youth (Napredna Omladina). He and the “progressists” were influenced by Masaryk’s realism, that is, his stress on daily social and cultural work and reaching out to the broader social strata instead of pursuing only “high politics,” as the traditional parties were doing. Other influences upon him were Ante Starčević (leader of the Party of Rights), the earlier Croatian national figures (“Illyrians”) and especially his brother Antun. Later he parted ways with the Progressive Youth (now the Progressive Party) because he was opposed to their Yugoslav ideal and they did not share his faith in the peasants and his advocacy of Croatian “state right.”

Antun worked as a teacher and, from 1899 to 1904, single-handedly published the journal *Dom* (Home), where he developed his populist and peasantist views. He started with the populist idealization of the patriarchal peasant way of life (and the *zadruga*, or extended family) and the desire to preserve it from the ruinous influence of capitalism. From there he evolved toward acceptance of market forces (and, to some extent, capitalism) and a desire to help peasant agriculture adapt to them. In his magazine he promoted various means to that end, especially credit and sales cooperatives, saving, an enterprising spirit and regulation of the rivers. In the spirit of populism, the brothers underlined the social contrast and opposition between the “gentlemen” (*gospoda*) and the “people” in Croatian society; the former were landowners, officials, lawyers and usurers (usually educated and hence called “intelligentsia”), while the latter were peasants, village craftsmen and village traders. They were like “two peoples” (as in the quotation above). They had different cultures: the gentlemen had

und ihre Bauernbewegung (Vienna/Leipzig: Luser Verlag, 1940); Ljubica Vuković-Todorović, *Hrvatski seljački pokret braće Radića* (Belgrade: Smiljevo, 1940).

appropriated Western ways and urban “civilization,” and the people (that is, the peasants) had their own popular culture. Only the latter preserved authentic Croatian national culture (such as national dress, folk songs, customs and morals), and thus only peasants embodied the nation.⁸⁵ The peasants deserved priority, the Radići argued, due to their number (four-fifths of the population), their tireless work and economic strength, their moral value, and their humaneness and good will toward other classes and peoples.⁸⁶ The two social groups also had a different view of politics: the gentlemen thought that only they could rule the country based on their “estatist” privileges, while the common people (meaning the peasants) wanted political rights for themselves and participation in the rule of the country (at least, that was what the Radići wanted for them). The Radići took the side of the (peasant) people and advocated its interests. Their goal was not to revolutionize the peasants against the “gentlemen” (landowners, bourgeoisie, officials) but to make the latter turn to their own people, that is, to make a new commitment. The social cohesion (or “harmony”) of the nation was also seen as a precondition for completing the national revival and effectively promoting the Croatian national cause within the empire. In other words, the Radići were involved simultaneously in a social (peasantist) and a nation-building project.

The use of words like “people” (*narod*), “common people” (*puk*), “peasants” and “gentlemen” (*gospoda*) is quite revealing in understanding the Croatian peasantist ideology and its rhetorical force. On the one hand, as Mark Biondich points out, the Radići regarded the people (*narod*) as being composed of two groups: the *gospoda* and the *puk* (common people), consisting mostly of peasants but also urban workers. On the other hand (especially in the postwar era of mass politics), they tended to identify the people or the nation with the peasantry. “People’s state” actually meant peasant state, and “people’s politics” meant peasant politics, that is, an emphasis on the participation and even leading role of the peasants. Thus they downplayed the (exclusive) class nature of their ideology and party, even though these had a pronounced class (peasant) character. It was always the *gospoda* (specifically, the city-dwellers and intelligentsia)

⁸⁵ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 52–54. See also Vladko (Vladimir) Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom* (University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1957), 41–42. See also Dragoljub Jovanović, “Socijalizam i seljastvo,” in Dragoljub Jovanović and Božidar Jakšić, *Sloboda od straha. Izbrane političke razprave*, eds. Nadežda Jovanović and Božidar Jakšić (Belgrade: Filip Višnjić, Naučna knjiga, 1991, first published in 1941), 166–196, esp. 182.

⁸⁶ In the introduction (“Prolog”) by Stjepan Radić to Herzeg, *Die ideologie der kroatischen*, 18–19. Similarly Maček, *In the Struggle*, 46.

who had to “return to the people,” not the (common) people who had to follow the lead of the intelligentsia. This was in keeping with the desire to achieve both social harmony and national unity, but on a peasantist basis.⁸⁷ This contrasts significantly with Stamboliyski’s peasantism, which tended to exclude the other “estates” and “professions” from “the (peasant) people” and to clash with them rather than to integrate them.

The peasantist views of the Radići can be summarized in the following way.⁸⁸ They elaborated the powerful concept of “peasant right(s)” and, based on that, of “people’s (peasant) politics” and “people’s (peasant) state.” The peasants’ rights were economic, political and social and ranged from the right to a homestead, land, forests and alleviation of debts through political participation (based on universal suffrage), occupying positions in government at all levels, bureaucratic accountability and referenda on major political questions, to the raising of the social status of the peasantry. These were to be achieved by various practical measures and arrangements, such as providing the peasants with land by breaking up the large estates and selling the land to the peasants at market prices, establishing a state-sponsored Peasant Bank, setting up an insurance fund against natural disasters, administrative reform to increase self-government at the communal and regional level, reduction of indirect taxes, introduction of universal manhood suffrage, reform of the central government (the Sabor was to be entirely elected, and the *ban* was to be elected by the Sabor and accountable to it) and reform of the education system with stress on practical education.

As for how to achieve this, the Radići were strict legalists and pacifists and opposed to revolutionary activities, class struggles and socialism (identified with destruction of the existing order and the abolition of private property). Moreover, they promoted the peasantist ideals as a way to avoid proletarianization of the peasants and to neutralize socialism. They were firm advocates of private property. The division of the big estates and transfer of the land into peasant hands had to be accomplished by legal sale, not by revolutionary seizure. The Radići had a strong sense of, and commitment to, social justice. They were religious (and believed the

⁸⁷ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 64–67. See also the “Epilog” by Stjepan Radić to Herceg, *Die ideologie der kroatischen*, 83–90. According to Radić, every gentleman or worker who stands outside the peasant milieu is outside the people and against it; the peasants attract the intelligentsia, the workers and the bourgeoisie; these groups feed into and enlarge the “family of the (Croatian) people.”

⁸⁸ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 67–90; Freidzon, “Sotsial’no-politicheskie.”

peasants were as well) but anti-clerical and interpreted the idea of "Christian democracy" as authentically peasant democracy. Not only was the thought of secular morality alien to them, but they rejected politics not based on Christian morality as leading to manipulation, demagoguery and even violence.

Peasant rights justified people's politics, that is, mobilization of the peasants and their organization in a peasant party with the goal of taking state power into peasant hands. Once this was achieved, the peasantry would organize a people's (basically peasant) state in accordance with its interests based on peasant rights. This would be the era of the "fifth estate" (the peasantry). The peasants would run and control the state apparatus at all levels. The concept of a peasant state took shape before 1914 but was most fully elaborated in the party's 1921 constitution. However, the peasant state was not only an end in itself but a powerful concept to overcome the alienation of the peasants from the existing polity and rally the Croatian peasantry behind the national cause. If the peasants identified with a state advocating their interests, they would be won for the national cause.

On the issue of industrialization, the Radići never formulated a clear-cut stand. They were not opposed to developing industries, but their primary concern was to defend the interests of the peasants from the traumas of modernization. The agrarian nature of Croatian society presented no problem for them. Like most peasantists, they took a rather static view of society, and they assumed that the peasant way of life would be preserved indefinitely. Moreover, since they identified the peasantry as the bearer of national culture, they could not welcome a policy that would erode its status and transform it into urban workers. On the other hand, the democratization and nation-building they achieved by mobilizing the peasants and drawing them into politics in particular were certainly part of the modernization process. Their attitude toward (*laissez-faire*) capitalism was, predictably, not very enthusiastic, given their defense of the peasant community as a whole and their idea of social justice and Christian morality. They were against unfettered economic competition and excessive accumulation of wealth ("capitalist insatiability") and promoted cooperative economic organization. They were anti-Semitic, partly because they identified Jews with capitalism and exploitation.⁸⁹ They regarded the Croatian peasantry as a uniform whole and peasant agriculture

⁸⁹ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 74–77, 246.

as non-capitalist, non-exploitative and based on “labor” (or combining labor and capital). The Radići were convinced that (contrary to Marx) small and medium-size agriculture was replacing the big estates and was more productive. In fact, anti-capitalist propaganda notwithstanding, they promoted the modernization of Croatian peasant agriculture and its integration in capitalist market relations and identified with the economically advancing well-to-do peasantry. In 1908–1910 Stjepan Radić sympathized with the ideas of Western agrarianism, that is, the advocacy of a highly productive agrarian economy, and regarded Denmark as an ideal.

The Radići were as much nationalist as peasantist. Their peasantist (social) views were closely associated with their struggle for national emancipation. The economic progress of the peasants, the reduction of social inequality, and political democratization had to lead to a broadly-based national movement—a people’s movement—in contrast to the impotence of the narrow bourgeois parties. Their political goal was the unity of all Croats and Serbs living within Croatia’s historical borders (the triune kingdom of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia) and a far-reaching autonomy or statehood for Croatia within the Habsburg Empire. Stjepan Radić favored complete federalization of the Habsburg Empire, whereby the South Slavic peoples in it would be united around Croatia, but also (as a step in this direction) Austro-Slavism, meaning union with the Habsburgs and a triple empire (trialist solution). For this reason, until 1918 the Radići were monarchists and loyal to the emperor. They feared that the disintegration of the Habsburg Empire might cause the partition of the Croats and thus were against the anti-Austrian Serb movement. Moreover, they hailed the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria in 1908 and claimed it for the Croatian state. A Yugoslav solution in the sense of uniting Croatia with Serbia and Montenegro (as the Croat Progressive Youth in coalition with the Serb party sought) was anathema to them.

Radići believed that Croats and Serbs were culturally the same people and should unite in the struggle against Austro-Hungarian domination over the South-Slavs, but they would not allow the Serbs in Croatia to pursue autonomous Serb policies. That was their version of people’s unity (*narodno jedinstvo*)—and Yugoslavism—in contrast with that of Svetozar Pribićević, the leader of the Habsburg Serb intelligentsia, who sought a common South Slavic state on the ruins of the empire. Theirs was a cultural Yugoslavism (within the empire) but political Croatism on the basis of Croat historical state right. The Radići were Slavophiles in a wider cultural sense. They believed in the distinctiveness of the Slavic peoples and

their specific "character" (peace-loving and so on), contrasted with the Germanic and Romanic peoples; initially they also idealized the Russian commune (*mir*). They were driven by the idea of Slavic reciprocity and cooperation among South Slavs in particular, and among all Slavs in the Dual Monarchy.

The Croat Democratic Peasant Party (Hrvatska pučka seljačka stranka) was founded by the Radići at the end of 1904, and the program was adopted in January 1905. The basic ideas in the party program reflect the above ideological tenets: unification of the Croatian people within one territorial unit (while preserving loyalty to the empire); elimination of statist privileges (for instance, representation by right of the magnates in the Sabor and aristocratic tax exemptions); strong central apparatus and appointment of the local authorities from above (except for the communes); direct appointment by the emperor of the head of the Croat administration—the *ban*; election reform for the Croatian Sabor in the direction of universal suffrage; an agrarian program, which gave each family the right to as much land as it could cultivate and provided for the division and sale of the big estates at market prices with the agreement of the Sabor on the initiative of the self-governing communes; local self-government of the communes and creation of "agricultural councils" to deal with projects of economic development; elimination of indirect taxation on essential goods and channeling of finances toward agriculture; a referendum on the most important political issues; school reform in favor of practical education; and close cooperation with the Serbs and Czechs. Later on Antun Radić added a commentary in which he argued and justified the peasants' claims to political representation and taking part in government based on the progress of democratization and the fact that they were the most numerous estate, whose interests had to be taken into consideration. The Croat Peasant Party, according to this statement, was not revolutionary; it rejected class struggle and favored peace. The brotherhood among the Slavs was to provide support in the struggle against Hungarian and German domination. Finally, Antun Radić identified the party's foundations as faith in God, respect for legality and the constitution, Slav brotherhood and peasant orientation. This program was preserved with minor modifications in the very different conditions after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ For an analysis of the program, see Moritsch, "Die Bauerpartien," 371–373; Freidzon, "Sotsial'no-politicheskie," 300–302.

This was fairly radical in the existing conditions and encountered strong resistance from various milieus: the traditional parties, the clergy and the state administration. The very restricted suffrage in Austria-Hungary stood in the way of extending the influence of the Croat Peasant Party and turned it into a virtual representative of the richer peasants. Yet organization at the grassroots level was underway, and it would pay dividends in the new Yugoslav context after the disintegration of Austria-Hungary.

In the dramatic disintegration of Austria-Hungary and the preparation of the postwar order, Stjepan Radić, like most Croatian leaders, abandoned the failed Austro-Slavist idea and declared his support for a Yugoslav (that is, South Slav) state together with the Serbs.⁹¹ His political ideal changed to republicanism (under the impact of the new Czechoslovak and Polish states and revolutionary Russia), which—along with the peasant state—proved another powerful means to mobilize revolutionary peasant discontent and extend the influence of the Peasant Party. The National Council (Narodno Vijeće) formed in Zagreb assumed the representation of all Croats, Slovenes and Serbs from the Habsburg Empire and started negotiations with Serbia for unification. Instructions were worked out for a delegation that had to be sent to Belgrade to implement the unification. In a speech on November 24, 1918 (when the instructions were being given to the delegation), Stjepan Radić, the leader of what was still a small party, issued a warning to the politicians of the National Council and described how he envisioned the future state. It was to be a republic (in other words, not under the Serb dynasty), on a federative principle (against centralism), with broad self-government of the Croats and Slovenes, and based on social justice. The previous day he had demanded a “neutral peasant republic of Croatia.” On December 1, 1918, the Croatian delegation presented King Alexander (Karadjordjević) with its address on the unification with Serbia, and he in turn formally accepted it and proclaimed the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The disregard of Croatian federative aspirations soon became manifest, but without forces of order or an army, the National Council in Zagreb

⁹¹ There are many accounts of the history of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes—some pro-Serbian (“integral Yugoslavist”) or pro-Croatian, and others that are more neutral. Examples of the latter are Fred Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples* (Cambridge, London and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 139–171; Holm Sundhaussen, *Geschichte Jugoslawiens, 1918–1980* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne and Mainz: Verlag W. Kohl-Hammer, 1982), 36–101. From a pro-Serbian point of view, see Alex Dragnich, *The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

was in no position to resist, given the revolutionary disorder on its territory (army deserters, known as the Green Cadre or *zeleni kadar*) and the danger from Italy (which claimed part of Slovenia) in the Adriatic. Subsequently Stjepan Radić came out against the Union of December 1 and firmly insisted on Croatia's right to self-determination, though he did not exclude the (unrealistic) possibility of the creation of a federal Yugoslav republic. On December 8, 1920, he changed the name of his party to the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (Hrvatska republikanska seljačka stranka). Thus he denied the legitimacy of the Yugoslav state from the very beginning.

In November 1920 the elections for Constituent National Assembly (Skupština) were held.⁹² The newly formed Democratic Party of Ljubomir Davidović and Svetozar Pribičević (with a mostly Serbian constituency) won ninety-two seats; Pašić's Radical Party ninety-one seats, followed by the Communists (fifty-eight seats), the Croatian Republican Peasant Party (fifty seats), the Serb Agrarian Party (thirty-nine seats), the Slovene Popular Party (twenty-seven seats) and the Muslim organization (twenty-four seats). In these elections the Croatian Republican Peasant Party, which put forward candidates only in Croatia and Slovenia and ran mainly on its national program, won an absolute majority in Croatia (80 percent of the votes, fifty deputies) and emerged as a mass national party. The party had won the confidence of the peasantry both as a rural social movement and a national movement seeking to preserve national distinctiveness (and identity). Stjepan Radić decided not to take part in the Constituent Assembly and sent the Croatian deputies back to Zagreb, where they formed a "Croatian national representation." Thus began a policy of abstention that would last until 1924. Radić and his Peasant Party demanded a Croatian republic, national sovereignty and a Croatian constituent assembly (which would consider joining a Yugoslav confederation) and sought to obtain international recognition for the Croatian demands from the Great Powers at the Paris Peace Conference. On December 8, 1920, during an extraordinary congress of the party and a mass rally, Stjepan Radić declared the establishment of a "Neutral Peasant Republic of Croatia" and later drafted a constitution for it (adopted on May 14, 1921, published in 1922 as the party's program). This document was the final concept of a peasant state and contained provisions for administrative decentralization and peasant participation at all levels of government. It asserted

⁹² Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 149–206.

the principle of self-determination and all attributes of Croat statehood (except a standing army) and hinted that the peasant republic could enter a Yugoslav confederation in its present borders. All in all, in 1919–1920 Radić seems to have been committed to outright independence. Only after he realized that the statesmen at the Paris Peace Conference would not support the Croat claims did he move gradually to Yugoslav (con)federalism.⁹³ On June 28 (St. Vitus's Day), 1921, in the absence of the Croatian and other deputies, the Constituent Assembly adopted what was known as the Vidovdan Constitution, which created a unitary centralist state in which the monarch had very strong powers. The Croatian constitutional project for a federal state was not taken into consideration. In subsequent years Stjepan Radić made many attempts to assure the support of some great powers for the Croatian cause. Not surprisingly, he was unsuccessful, as the victors supported their Serbian war ally and the new state they had helped create.

Various accounts exist of the conflict between the Serbian “centralists” or “integralist Yugoslavists” (whom some labeled advocates of “Great Serbian hegemony”) and the Croatian “Federalists” or “Autonomists” (whom some labeled separatists). It is also debatable what exactly Radić (and his successor Maček) aspired to, that is, how much autonomy they sought, within what territorial confines, and in what type of (con)federation, and this also changed according to internal political and international circumstances. Because this conflict runs throughout the history of the first Yugoslavia, during World War II and (after a temporary suppression by the communists) toward the end of the second Yugoslavia, which ended in a war, it is perhaps impossible for the historian to be “neutral,” and it is difficult even to maintain a critical distance. At best one can hope to achieve some understanding of both sides, particularly by describing their different previous experiences in their respective political units, different ideological ideals and horizons, wartime experiences in opposite camps and diverging expectations for the future, and fundamentally, the clash of two nationalisms. But the conflict is not the main focus here. My schematic and selective reproduction of events is intended only to show

⁹³ Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984), 234–236; Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 161. On the Croat Peasant Party program, see also Herceg, *Die ideologie der kroatischen*, 63–68. The main points were autonomy, a republic, a peasant state, neutrality and pacifism, a referendum for accepting the laws, a plebiscite and (the right of) initiative by the people.

how the initial social (peasant) agenda of the Croatian Peasant Party was deflected and subordinated to the "national question."

The Croatian Peasant Party became the major national party in Croatia; it also succeeded in obtaining peasant support in Slovenia and penetrated the Muslim milieus and the national minorities. It boycotted the National Assembly until 1924. Still, it took part in the parliamentary elections in March 1923 and came second (after Pašić's Radicals) with seventy out of 313 deputies in the National Assembly. In July 1923 Stjepan Radić embarked on a tour of Europe to seek support for his federalist cause. After failing to gain support in Vienna, Berlin, Paris and London, he visited the Soviet Union in June–July 1924 and, on July 1, suddenly proclaimed that the Croatian Peasant Party was joining the Krestintern (Red Peasant International). His condition was that there would be no Yugoslav representation, and the Comintern even adopted a resolution on the Yugoslav national question that denounced Yugoslav unitarism and proclaimed that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were separate nations.⁹⁴ Radić's highly controversial act was not a demonstration of communist sympathies but a last, desperate attempt to internationalize the Croatian question. However, the communists treated him as a subordinate, he was immediately disillusioned and never actually collaborated with the Krestintern.⁹⁵ Radić returned to Zagreb in August 1924 and got the party congress's approval to join the Krestintern. The centralists and the monarch used this decision as a pretext to launch a bitter campaign against him, accusing him of communism and anti-state activities. He and other leaders of the party were arrested and imprisoned at the beginning of 1925 on charges of sedition according to the extraordinary State Security Act of 1921. There were threats that the party would be banned. In spite of this persecution, the Peasant Party did very well in the February 1925 elections (winning sixty-seven seats).

⁹⁴ More on that in Louisa Reviakina, "Le cas Stjepan Radić et l'Internationale Agrarienne," *Études balkaniques* 31, no. 1 (1995), 35–55. See also Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, 104–109. The terms of the agreement were that Radić would agree with the Kresintern's goal of a "peasant-worker alliance" and eventually such a government; but he sharply criticized the Yugoslav Communist Party and went on to argue that such an alliance could be achieved in Croatia if everyone joined the Croatian Peasant Party, which already represented the interests of the Croatian workers (and that, consequently, the communist party need not take part in such a government).

⁹⁵ Asked by his close associate Maček what he had achieved in Moscow, he answered: "Nothing, the communists do not want allies, only servants." See Maček, *The Struggle for Freedom*, 100.

The Pašić-Pribićević government decided to change course and negotiate with the Croatian Peasant Party to secure its support and include it in the government in return for concessions. Then Stjepan Radić executed a political volte-face. On March 27, 1925, his nephew—the deputy Pavle Radić—announced in the Skupština on his behalf that the Croatian Republican Peasant Party recognized the Vidovdan Constitution, renounced republicanism and recognized the Karadjordjević dynasty. The party also renounced its connection with the Krestintern. Stjepan Radić was released and entered Pašić's government as minister of education in November 1925. This was certainly an act of capitulation, but it came only after he became convinced that no support from abroad was forthcoming. He seems to have followed Pašić's advice to accept the constitution for a while before judging whether change was needed. Naturally, reactions were mixed. Some considered it a pragmatic move, while others spoke of a "betrayal" of principles (of Croat autonomy and federation and republicanism). Yet in those years a lot was achieved—peasant mobilization and social and national cohesion around the Croatian Peasant Party.

Stjepan Radić was a highly controversial personality in politics and remains so in historiography.⁹⁶ Some have portrayed him as a peace-maker, a democrat, a pan-Slav, anti-clerical, a humanist, and a real Yugoslav who fought against Great Serbian hegemony. However, others have painted him as a Croatian nationalist and advocate of Greater Croatia (with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Banat and the Sandžak); a pan-Slav (in the Roman Catholic tradition), but also an Austrophile (Germanophile), that is, nostalgic for the Habsburgs and the Austro-Slav ideal; a Serbophobe; anti-Yugoslav (separatist or nearly separatist); and an anti-Semite. Still others have depicted him as psychologically unstable: a hysterical maniac and a mad prophet, a political "acrobat" and charlatan. Finally, some have explained his sudden and unexpected political transformations as political tactics designed to confuse his opponents. Apart from that, Radić was a peasant spokesman-tribune of the plebs in the Roman sense, who identified with the peasants, swayed them with emotional speeches and won their trust and devotion. His populist rhetoric, in which "the people" always meant the peasants, was often inflammatory and got him carried

⁹⁶ Nikola Žutić, "Stjepan Radić—istoriografske kontroverze," <http://www.megaupload.com> (accessed August 25, 2011). Žutić believes that Radić's sudden transformations can be explained as political maneuvering (to confuse his opponents) and that he was basically a Germanophile nostalgic for Habsburg Austria, a Serbophobe and an anti-Yugoslav (who sided with all of Yugoslavia's political enemies).

away. In that respect he was very much like the Bulgarian peasant leader Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, with his tireless speechifying.

At least some of Radić's contradictions can be explained by the various social and political contexts in which he was active: the Habsburg Empire and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The change from Austro-Slavism to Yugo-Slavism was quite natural, but his Austro-Slavism found a continuation in his concept of Croatian autonomy and the former Habsburg confines of that autonomy. As Ivo Banac remarked, "his Yugo-slavism ended on the borders of Austria-Hungary," and his federal ideal posited Croatia as the center (at least in the prewar and the immediate postwar years).⁹⁷ He went from (Habsburg) monarchism to republicanism to (Karadjordje) monarchism, obviously based on his national goals. Yugoslavism in particular could mean different things, depending on who was in and who was out of the ideal federation, who was the pillar and power center of the federation, and who was the periphery. Federalism itself could mean different degrees of autonomy of the parts, from a centralized federation to a loose confederation, and the preference for one or the other could depend on the place of one's own nation in it. Croatian nationalism was most likely at the center of Radić's credo and determined his variety of Yugoslavism and "people's unity" (*narodno jedinstvo*); his attitude toward the actual Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes; and the attitude towards the others in general. From that point of view, his agreement with Pašić's Radicals could hardly be sincere and could not turn him into a Yugoslav "centralist." In fact, Mark Biondich, the biographer of Stjepan Radić, finds a great deal of consistency in his actions in terms of Croatian nationalist (but not chauvinist) goals and a sincere commitment to his peasant constituency.⁹⁸

The "union of opposites" could not last long, and conflicts soon arose, because Radić criticized the co-ruling Radical Party at various meetings and joined those accusing Pašić's son of corruption. He also started talking as early as February 1926 about the need to revise the constitution.⁹⁹ He was excluded from the government in April 1926, and the coalition disintegrated in January 1927. In the next elections in September 1927, the Croatian Peasant Party lost votes and seats, most likely because of the compromise. After the elections an alliance was formed between the

⁹⁷ Ivo Banac, *Nacionalno pitanje u Jugoslaviji. Porijeklo, povijest, politika* (Zagreb: Durieux, 1995), cited on 217; Banac, *The National Question*, 234–235.

⁹⁸ Biondich, *Stjepan Radić*, 253–254.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 206–244.

erstwhile enemies Radić and Pribičević (the leader of the Independent Democrats)—the Peasant-Democratic coalition, which embarked upon obstructionist tactics in the Skupština. Politicians confronted each other sharply on various issues, and some actually came to blows. On June 20, 1928, a Montenegrin Radical deputy shot and killed two Croatian deputies and severely wounded Stjepan Radić, who died a few weeks later (on August 8, 1928). The ensuing political crisis ended only with the establishment of the royal dictatorship of King Alexander Karadjordjević on January 6, 1929. The king embarked on a policy of “integral Yugoslavism” in a unitary centralist state under his auspices (with a new constitution in 1931). Political parties were banned from public activity. Stjepan Radić was succeeded as party leader by Vladimir (Vladko) Maček (1879–1964), a middle-class intellectual not of peasant origin, who steadfastly continued to support Croatian autonomy within a federative Yugoslavia. The politics of the Croat Peasant Party now turned full circle to the initial, more hardline position of full autonomy, if not separation (rejected by Maček). Together with that, the nationalist character of the party intensified at the expense of its social (peasantist) demands, and it became more centralized and undemocratic internally because of the severe political climate and the persecutions.

Under conditions of royal dictatorship, hardline centralism and repression, some opposition leaders were imprisoned in 1933 for criticizing the regime, including Dragoljub Jovanović (leader of the Serbian Agrarian Party) and Vladimir Maček (for anti-state activities). Then came the assassination of King Alexander on October 9, 1934, in Marseilles by a Macedonian terrorist. As his son Peter was underage, a regency was established with Prince Paul (Alexander’s first cousin), and several governments came and went until a stable one was produced (1935–1939) under Milan Stojadinović. Vladko Maček, who was released from prison, headed the “united opposition” in 1935—an opposition bloc of the Croatian Peasant Party with the Serbian agrarians, the Democrats (of Pribičević, who was in exile), and the Muslim Organization.

By that time the Croat Peasant Party had almost lost its peasant character because of the mass influx of people from all social strata and the “embourgeoisement” of its leadership. Characteristically, the need was felt to extend the notion of “people” beyond the peasants proper. As the ideologist Rudolf Bičanić argued, the term “peasant” was not a profession and not an “estate” but a notion of cultural order, connected with the peasant culture (tradition and way of life). A member of “the people,” then, was not only a peasant, who was just a “representative advocate of peasant

culture,” but all those “who belong to the circle of the autochthonous and collective peasant culture.”¹⁰⁰

Since its very inception, the Croatian Peasant Party insisted that, though based primarily on peasants, it was not a class (or estate) party. The party’s class character was expressly rejected by the ideologist Rudolf Herceg, who distanced the Croat party from “estatist” (or class) peasant movements and parties, such as the Bulgarian agrarians and the Serbian agrarians. In his argument these were created by “agrarian socialists” coming from poor peasants and rural workers, in contrast to the agrarian movement of the Western “agrarians,” who were interested in state protectionism. By contrast, he claimed that the Croatian peasant movement was not purely economic and did not defend only peasant class interests, but was based on the broadest human quality (*Menschlichkeit*) according to the Christian credo and the advocacy of “universal human justice,” hence its slogan “Belief in God and Peasant Unity.”¹⁰¹ The insistence on the Croatian Peasant Party’s non-class all-national character can be explained by its populist stance in the beginning (idealization of the peasant “people”) and its increasingly strong national dimension thereafter: in the course of the political struggles, it represented and rallied (and to an extent forged) the Croatian nation. That is why, allowing for the ever-present element of demagoguery, the leadership did not want to be socially divisive and to pit the peasants against the other classes that had become more numerous in the meantime and thus to avoid creating internal political fronts and opponents among the Croats. This was quite clearly expressed by Maček (in his eulogy at Stjepan Radić’s funeral): “The Croatian peasantry constitutes not a mere class, but a nation, which desires to be recognized as such...”; “The right of the Croatian peasant people to govern themselves engenders the logical need for the right to have their own free state of Croatia...”¹⁰²

During the dictatorship, and especially the Regency, the peasant cooperative movement rose to the highest prominence. In 1935 the Croatian Peasant Party created a special organization—Gospodarska Sloga (Economic or Farm Agreement)—as its economic branch.¹⁰³ Its main ideologist was

¹⁰⁰ Cited in Ivica Šute, *Slogom Slobodi! Gospodarska Sloga 1935–1941* (Zagreb: Srednja Europa, 2010), 76–77.

¹⁰¹ Herceg, *Die Ideologie der Kroatischen*, 46–50, 65–66.

¹⁰² Maček, *In the Struggle for Freedom*, 117.

¹⁰³ Ivica Šute’s *Slogom Slobodi!* is a recently published study of Gospodarska Sloga. As Šute put it, Gospodarska Sloga was a parallel political organization and surrogate of

Rudolf Bićanić. He closely linked the village cooperative to the regional level and via the idea of organized peasantry to the concept of the peasant state; the cooperative movement was thus placed on a broad basis and became an all-national organization. It was animated by the idea of economic emancipation of the peasantry.¹⁰⁴ In fact, *Gospodarska Sloga* was a parallel organization and a kind of substitute for the (then-banned) Croatian Peasant Party. It was organized by party members, who then joined it, which explains its spectacular growth to a quarter-million members in just three years and its huge influence. It resembled a professional syndicate in that it organized assistance among the peasants on a national level and fought their exploiters through strikes and blockades, and it wielded much greater political power than the ordinary cooperative organizations. Its strength is demonstrated by the fact that it rapidly absorbed all other forms of economic association in Croatia; in crisis years it also succeeded in arranging barter between the grain-producing regions and the "passive" regions (wheat for Dalmatian wine) and thus prevented the rise of grain prices and famine. In addition to the economic cooperative organization, under the leadership of the Peasant Party there were educational and cultural organizations of the peasantry, such as *Seljačka sloga* (Peasant Union or Concord). Generally, the peasant cooperative movement in Croatia was tightly controlled by the Croatian Peasant Party, in contrast to Bulgaria, where the agrarians could not take control of the cooperative movement, and only a fraction of the peasant cooperatives remained under their influence.

In their opposition to the dictatorship, the strongest political parties in Yugoslavia, including the Radical Party, had come to advocate an agreement with the Croats and a change of the constitution; an agreement to that effect was concluded in October 1937. In the December 1938 elections, the "united opposition" led by Vladko Maček (which included the Independent Democrats, the Serbian agrarians and the National Radicals), despite pressure and vote-rigging, won approximately 45 percent of the votes. The external threat from Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy was increasing and added urgency to the necessity of reaching an agreement, and thus gave an impetus to Maček's efforts.

In February 1939 Dragiša Cvetković formed a government that was entrusted by the Regency with reaching an agreement with the opposition

the political party (85, 88, 443). See also Ruth Trouton, *Peasant Renaissance in Yugoslavia 1900–1950* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1952), 157–162.

¹⁰⁴ On the cooperative ideology of Bićanić, see Šute, *Slogom Slobodi*, 73–80.

and solving the Croatian question. After negotiations between Cvetković and Maček that involved escalation of the Croatian demands, a *Sporazum* (agreement) was concluded on August 20, 1939 (and proclaimed on August 26), to reorganize the state, giving Croatia far-reaching autonomy within Yugoslavia. It was to become an autonomous province (*banovina*) that included not only what was then Croatian territory but also most of Slavonia, Dalmatia and parts of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Maček became vice-premier and the arrangement of the *banovina* started with a *ban* (governor) appointed by the king (and responsible to him and the Sabor), an elected assembly (Hrvatski Sabor) and self-government in many spheres except for foreign affairs, foreign trade, defense and security. Thus what the Croatian Peasant Party sought from the very beginning was finally achieved. This was to be the first step toward a federal system to be established by a new constitution; as later became clear, the question of boundaries between the future autonomous units would be an issue of contention, especially between Serbia and Croatia. But the outbreak of war in September 1939, with the combined German-Soviet aggression against Poland, cut short these processes. Yugoslavia fell victim to Hitler's aggression in April 1941. Hitler and Mussolini established the "Independent Croatian State" (Nezavisna država Hrvatska), a puppet state run by the Ustasha, the fascist followers of Ante Pavelić. Some activists of the former Croatian Peasant Party joined the new administration, while most of its activists joined the antifascist resistance. Maček emigrated to the United States. The arrangement of the second Yugoslavia by the communists after the war was on an entirely new basis.

SERBIAN AGRARIANISM

The peasant movement of Serbia started relatively late.¹⁰⁵ This was due to the exclusive influence of the Radical Party, whose origins were the populism and socialism of Svetozar Marković. Pašić and other Radical

¹⁰⁵ On the Serbian agrarian movement, see Gennadii F. Matveev, "Ideologicheskoe razvitiie serbskogo krest'yanskogo dvizheniya v mezghoenny period," *Tokovi istorije*, 1995, nos. 1-2, 61-91; Ivan Avakumović, "The Serb Peasant Party, 1919-1945," in *The Peasantry of Eastern Europe*, ed. Ivan Volgyes, vol. 1, *Roots of Rural Transformation* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1979), 57-78; Andreas Moritsch, "Die Bauernpartien bei den Kroaten, Serben," 391-396. A description of the ideological principles appears in Miloš Moskovljevič, "Dix ans du Savez Zemljoradnika Yougoslave," *Bulletin du Bureau International Agraire* (Prague), 1930, no. 1, 11-15. Generally on the situation of the peasants, the agrarian reform and agrarian policies in the first Yugoslavia, see Jozo Tomasevich, *Peasants, Politics and Economic Change in Yugoslavia* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1955).

socialists actually pre-empted the creation of a peasant movement around the very popular peasant deputy Adam Bogosavljević and some other peasant deputies by co-opting them and appropriating their legacy in favor of the Radical Party after the death of Bogosavljević.¹⁰⁶ With its grassroots populist activities and efforts, the Radicals were able to “tap the reservoir of peasant resentment” and retain the sympathies of the peasants for a long time despite their prolonged stay in office and their embourgeoisement. An attempt to launch a peasant party in 1904—Narodna seljačka sloga—failed. The most significant Serbian peasant party—the Agrarian Union (Savez Zemljoradnika, literally, of land-tillers)—was created already in the changed conditions after World War I, not incidentally around the cooperative movement, by its founder, theoretician and principal organizer Mihailo Avramović (1864–1945). It was founded on October 12, 1919, in Velika Plana by peasant delegates, veterans of the war, and by activists in the cooperative movement and teachers, with the objective of defending specifically agrarian interests. It began publishing the weekly *Selo* (Village). A similar peasant party was founded in Bosnia and Hercegovina—the Union of Peasants (Savez težaka). Another peasant organization, though more of a consumer cooperative, was founded in Dalmatia: Težačka sloga (Peasant Agreement). The three organizations merged at a conference in Belgrade on August 1, 1920, and adopted a program based on that of the Agrarian Union in Serbia. A similar agrarian party was formed in Slovenia in 1919—the Independent Peasant Party (Samostojna kmetijska stranka)—but it did not join the union. Largely due to their experience during the war, the peasants had finally come to perceive themselves as a specific socioeconomic class with its own interests that needed a separate organization to represent and protect them.

The Agrarian Union took part in the elections for the Constituent National Assembly in 1920 with great success—putting thirty deputies in office (making it the fourth-largest party in the Assembly)—and presented its own constitutional project. The leader of the Radical Party, Pašić, tried to assure agrarian support for the Radicals’ project. But when told that the condition for such support was land reform without compensation for

¹⁰⁶ On how the legacy of Bogosavljević was appropriated by the Radicals, see Latinka Perović, “Politička upotreba smrti opozicionog narodnog poslanika Adama Bogosavljevića: postavljanje organizacije Narodne radikalne stranke,” in Latinka Perović, *Između Anarhije i Autokratije, Srpsko društvo na prelazami vekova (XIX–XXI)* (Belgrade: Helsinški odbor za ljudska prava u Srbiji, 2006), 111–126. See also Augusta Dimou, *Entangled Paths Towards Modernity: Contextualizing Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2009), 96–98.

the big landowners, Pašić declined it; most of the agrarian deputies voted against the Vodovdan Constitution. The Agrarian Union could not repeat this success (in subsequent elections it secured, variously, between 115,000 and 153,000 votes, and between four and ten seats).

The Agrarian Union's ideological views were elaborated in its programs, in its journal and in other publications. The first program, adopted at the founding conference, presents the following tenets: the party would defend the interests of the peasants (argued only on the basis of their numerical prevalence); society was to be based on work, meaning that there were to be no idlers or parasites living at the expense of others, and everybody would be entitled to the fruits of their own labor; the estates of the big landowners (obviously in the new territories) were to be expropriated and the land given to those who cultivated it with their own hands and lived there permanently. This (non-capitalist) society of the future is called "economic democracy." The cooperatives were assigned a very important role in resolving current problems and as a prototype of the future social order, while industry, commerce, finance and credit, communications and transport would be entirely in the hands of the state. Finally, the political will of the people in such a society would be expressed in a parliament, where the peasants would be represented in proportion to their numbers, and there would also be far-reaching self-government. As can be seen, this ideology has a great deal in common with the ideology of the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, which served as an inspiring example and a blueprint for its ideology and program.¹⁰⁷

The agrarian ideology was developed further in several directions. To begin with, the peasantry's leading role in society was argued for (in addition to its size) in the spirit of the peasant mystique, such as affirmation of the value of peasant labor as a foundation of the society and the distinctive positive qualities of the peasants (while still recognizing their illiteracy, backwardness and social passivity). The differences between the rural and urban way of life were accentuated by U. Stajić in a way similar to Aleksandăr Stamboliyski and Piterim Sorokin's "ideology of agrarianism."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ This is expressly pointed out by Dragoljub Jovanović, "Jedinstvo zemljoradničkog pokreta," in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 158–165 (first published in 1937), esp. 160. As additional influences the author points to the Swiss Agrarian Union and the Russian Revolution. On the popularity of Stamboliyski in Yugoslavia, see Kosta Krajšumović, "Čiljevi i uspjesi saveza semljoradnika," *M.A.B. Bulletin du Bureau International Agraire* (Prague) (1926), no. 3, 50–53, esp. 52.

¹⁰⁸ Uroš Stajić, "Selo i grad," in *Kalendar selo za prostu 1924 godinu* (Belgrade, 1924), 159–167. In the typical way, Stajić saw the peasantry as the guardian of the nation's physical

The attitude towards the other social and professional strata became more clear-cut: opposed to the various groups of the bourgeoisie, especially usurers, bankers and traders; supportive of the working class and the intelligentsia (especially the rural intelligentsia of village teachers). Only the peasants and the workers as the working and productive, and hence, the most valuable part of society, were entitled to political power. The other social groups, such as traders, civil servants and intelligentsia, were to serve their needs.

The vision of the ideal future society became more definite and was identified as *zadružno* (cooperative) society,¹⁰⁹ non-capitalist and non-communist. To quote *Zemljoradnički trebnik* in the early 1920s:

The ideal of the agrarian movement is . . . the cooperative [*zadružna*] state. Now the society and the state are based on a capitalist system. The laws and the government are arranged in such a way that a small number of people, with the help of money-capital, collect in their banks and cashboxes the labor and payment of millions of land-tillers and workers. Neither a capitalist state nor a communist state, but only the cooperative state, creates an order in which everyone keeps the fruits of his labor and there are no oppressors and no oppressed.¹¹⁰

The cooperatives in this concept would replace all capitalist enterprises and middlemen; they would prevent the concentration of private property in the hands of a few while preserving the principle of private property as an incentive. Capitalism is harshly criticized on the grounds that it is exploitative in nature, creates sharp economic and social inequalities, tends to result in wars, and lacks real democracy. The existing democratic and parliamentary order is exposed as a façade behind which the bourgeoisie exploits the urban and rural workers. Since the mid-1920s the negative aspects of capitalism were increasingly associated with economic laissez-faire liberalism. Socialism was rejected by the Serbian agrarians, including their leftist current, because of the abolishment of private property, which the agrarians felt was the basis of peasant existence and a stimulus for work and improvement. At the same time they were against the accumulation of private property in the hands of a minority and for a

health and morality and that part of society that nourished and regenerated the degenerating urban population.

¹⁰⁹ Characteristically, the word *zadruga*, which designates the extended family, is used for "cooperative" (and as an adjective, by extension, to cooperative society and cooperative state), which are thus associated with a patriarchal-collectivistic notion.

¹¹⁰ Cited in Matveev, "Ideologičeskoe razvitie," 70.

more equal distribution. Some affinities with socialism were nevertheless recognized, such as the collectivist view of cooperativism and the critique of capitalism and social inequality, but it was stressed that the objectives and the means were different.¹¹¹ The ideal of a cooperative state had to be attained not through revolution but through legal political means.

The cooperative state was to have the agrarian cooperatives as its economic base and the self-governing peasant councils (*vijeće*) as its political base. According to the project for a constitution in 1921 and in later versions, the National Assembly (*skupština*) also needed to be reformed toward professional representation. It was to be composed not of political parties but of delegates of the professional unions and cooperatives (three-fourths of the deputies were to be representatives of the agrarians), who would be responsible to them for their activities and subject to recall. The premier was to be elected by the National Assembly for a two-year term; broad local self-government is envisioned, based on the village councils; the monarch would have only representative functions. The influence of Stamboliyski's "estatist" political representation comes through here clearly, and similar views were expressed by the Union of the Peasant Youth of the Republic of Poland (or Agrarian Youth Organization of Poland), known as "Wici"—which also sought a radical transformation of the existing bourgeois society. Characteristically, and similar to some founders of the Bulgarian National Peasant Union, the first leader of the Serbian Agrarian Union, Mihailo Avramović, himself an experienced cooperative organizer, did not share the idea of a cooperative state. He saw the objective of the Union as uplifting and educating the peasants and achieving a balance between village and town, industry and agriculture, rather than in a directly political role of the agrarians (and he was forced out of the leadership by the more politically minded and radical agrarians).

The concept of a cooperative state (*zadružna država*), with its claim of peasant dominance and rule, understandably prompted accusations from political opponents of a tendency towards dictatorship and hampered compromise and collaboration. Some felt that peasantism needed to be moderated. One expression of such a search for compromise and a "middle course" was the idea of solidarism (since the mid-1920s), namely a balance between the economically strong and the weak to be achieved

¹¹¹ Dušan Grubić, "Kapitalizam, komunizam i zadrugarstvo," in *Kalendar selo za prostu 1926 godinu* (Belgrade, 1926), 95–101.

through cooperation in various spheres. The state was to interfere in favor of the socially weak, but not to the extent that it subordinated economic activity and killed private initiative. The cooperative state was reinterpreted as a state that ensured the equality of the peasants with the other social groups rather than an entirely peasant state.¹¹² The word “agrarianism” entered the vocabulary of the agrarian publicists, obviously due to the influence of the Czech agrarians and Antonín Švehla in particular (whose “Man and Soil” was translated in *Kalendar selo* for 1926). Uroš Stajić—general secretary of the Agrarian Party—provided a definition of “agrarianism” with the abstraction and moderation characteristic of the Czech agrarians and the mystique of the peasant’s relation to the soil contained in Švehla’s “law of the land.”¹¹³

The development of the Serbian Agrarian Union was accompanied by a number of internal conflicts and splits. At the 1923 party congress the Serbian nationalist trend prevailed, and the founder and influential leader M. Avramović left the party (in 1927 he was also removed from the leadership of the cooperative movement). The new leaders were the former diplomat Jovan Jovanović, nicknamed Pižon (Pigeon) (1869–1939) and Milan Gavrilović, whose politics were moderate to conservative. In 1927 the Agrarian Union was joined by the radical leftist Group for Social and Cultural Action led by Dragoljub Jovanović (a sociologist educated in France and a professor at Belgrade University), and by Milan Pribićević and his associates. The leftists advocated a kind of agrarian socialism. The internal strife between the rightist leadership and the leftist current intensified, weakening the movement. Over the years the Agrarian Union tried to reach an agreement with the Croatian Peasant Party of Stjepan Radić, but without success, even though the proposal was for some concessions to Croatia from the position of centralism and monarchism; its leftist current was closer to the Croatian position.

The “agrarian (or peasant) socialism” elaborated by Dragoljub Jovanović since 1927 had little to do with the Marxist socialism of the urban working class. It was also explicitly distinguished from the old Russian agrarian socialism of communal land ownership and from the American agrarian socialism of Henry George. It aimed at a more even distribution of the

¹¹² For example, Aleksandar Krušćević, “Solidarizam kao nauka zemljoradničkog pokreta,” in *Kalendar selo za prostu 1926 godinu* (Belgrade, 1926), 55–58; Aleksandar Krušćević, “Zemljoradična demokratija,” in *Kalendar selo za prostu 1929 godinu* (Belgrade, 1929), 207–209.

¹¹³ This definition in Matveev, “Ideologicheskoe razvitie,” 81–82.

wealth, and land in particular, among the greatest number of people capable of working it. It supported private property and departed from the principle that the land should belong to those who till it; private property was to be restricted to a certain size, no more than could be tilled with one's own labor without exploiting other people. Peasant socialism was deemed especially appropriate for the agricultural states of Central and Southeastern Europe. In arguing for peasant socialism (along with working-class socialism), Jovanović traced the genealogy of socialist ideas, starting from the first Christians through "utopian socialism" (Robert Owen) and the "scientific" socialism of Marx, the varieties of Christian socialism, German *Kathedersozialismus* (academic socialism), state socialism, American agrarian socialism, communal socialism and syndicalist socialism, until socialism finally comes to the peasants.¹¹⁴ Connected with it was the idea that the twentieth century is a century of the peasants as a new social force—the "fifth estate" (just as the nineteenth century was the century of the workers and the eighteenth century of the bourgeoisie)—and that the ideology of this new social force should be agrarian socialism.¹¹⁵

The radical leftist group did not prevail, and what followed was a full decade of rivalry between the leaders and factional strife, as well a search for a political line on the strongly controversial Croatian question, the attitude towards the working class (and its party) and the Soviet Union, and so on. The conflict within the agrarians reached its peak when its right-wing leadership entered the Cvetković-Maček government in 1939 and the left wing left the party and created its own National Peasant Party (*Narodna seljačka stranka*) on March 17, 1940. The ideology of this leftist party, worked out primarily by Dragoljub Jovanović, was under the sign of "labor democracy" (*radna demokratija*). It developed partly separately, but partly in conjunction with, the already described "peasant socialism." According to this concept, the criterion for a person's usefulness could only be work (either intellectual or physical), which was to be a universal responsibility, but also a universal right. Exploitation of others' labor was not to be allowed. Labor was also to be the ideology of the state ("labor state"—*država rada*), and only working people were to enjoy full civic

¹¹⁴ Dragoljub Jovanović, "Naš agrarni socijalizam," in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 131–133 (first published in 1931). The concept of "peasant socialism" was further elaborated in Dragoljub Jovanović, "Socijalizam i seljaštvo," in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 166–196 (first published in 1941), esp. 166–175, 187–196.

¹¹⁵ Dragoljub Jovanović, "Licem selu!" in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 127–130, esp. 128 (first published in 1927).

rights. The cooperative sector was to be promoted and the private sector was to be tolerated insofar as it did not harm the common interest, but it had to be restricted (and finally abolished). There was, in addition, the public sector of the state, seen as a necessity. The concept of "labor" would actually bring together peasants and workers, villages and cities. The usual contrast was drawn between city and village, urban people and peasants, all in favor of the peasants as "whole persons," who lived a healthy life closer to nature and developed a wide range of abilities. At the same time the bad situation of the peasants in underdeveloped states was acknowledged. But rather than denigrating the cities (as Stamboliyski did), Jovanović's concept tried to combine the positive aspects of life in the towns and the villages and sought to bring education, science and modern technology to the peasants. While "labor democracy" was meant primarily for a peasant society, it would be good for the workers, artisans, and the working intelligentsia; but it would restrict the private sector (especially with hired labor) and abolish capitalism. Political power in a "labor democracy" was to be in the hands of the organized producers. The future society and the state (and in time, a Balkan confederation and even an all-European state) would be organized on a federative principle, not in the sense of federating national units, but self-government of small units united in ever-bigger units; the primary unit should be the village (commune), then the district (*srez*), the province (*pokrajna*) and so on. The state—that is, the federal government—was to be entrusted with defense, foreign policy, credit and the agricultural plan.

The "labor democracy" of the Serbian leftists closely resembles the views of the group of leftist Bulgarian agrarians led by Mihail Genovski (a friend of Jovanović and also an academic) and of the "Wici" Union of the Peasant Youth of the Republic of Poland.¹¹⁶ Jovanović was certainly influenced by Genovski, whose work *Obshtestvenost i kultura* (Public and Culture) he cites as the "first systematic attempt at a leftist agrarian ideology."¹¹⁷ In this work Genovski elaborated the vision of a "cooperative society" based on "labor property," "labor farm" (*trudovo stopanstvo*) and "labor cooperatives" but did not speak of agrarian socialism.¹¹⁸ In turn he

¹¹⁶ As a primary source: *Narodna Seljačka stranka. Osnovna načela, program, statut* (Belgrade: Grafika, 1940), 7–11. This was mainly written by Dragoljub Jovanović, "Osnovna načela," in Jovanović, *Sloboda od straha*, 84–91 (first published in 1940). See also Matveev, "Ideologicheskoe razvitiie," 85–91.

¹¹⁷ Jovanović, "Socijalizam i seljaštvo," 190.

¹¹⁸ Genovski, *Obshtestvenost i kultura*, 177–185.

refers approvingly to Jovanović's "cult of work" (*kult rada*). He also cited Jovanović in developing a similar view of a new culture and way of life of the future based on living in villages (and de-urbanization), yet with all the advantages and comforts of urban civilization.¹¹⁹

Already during the war the leaders of the Serbian Agrarian Union were very active in the anti-German resistance, more than the traditional bourgeois parties, and were decimated. The agrarians were further persecuted by Tito after the war for collaborating with Draža Mihailović's *chetniks*. The leftist Dragoljub Jovanović collaborated for a time with the communist regime but was soon expelled from parliament and from the university for opposing forced collectivization. He was sentenced to nine years of hard labor, almost all of which he served.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I will conclude with a comparison of the main agrarian movements in the Balkans and by considering (as far as possible) mutual influences, transfers and entanglements. It was noted in the introduction that the peasant movements in Eastern Europe and the Balkans in particular were much more indigenous and tailored to local (national) conditions than the international socialist movement and still more than Moscow-directed communism. They evolved in close contact with the native realities and less with regard to the outside. Also, they were less theoretical and intellectual and more pragmatic and connected with political practices. This gave them some originality. Similarities between them often came from similar problems faced by the peasant smallholder agriculture, for which similar solutions were sought and proposed. But the general ideas shared by the peasantists and the issues they all had to address were concretized and influenced according to local social and political conditions.

First it must be stressed that what was typical in the Balkans in general was peasantry of the more radical variety. This is expressed in the animosity toward capitalism, the drive to transcend the bourgeois political establishment and the search for a "third way." In fact, among the agrarian movements a "third way" solution was the exception. Remaining within the limits of the bourgeois establishment and political coalition-building was more common. A study of the agrarian movements in Eastern Europe

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 235–237, 410–411, 450–455.

by Lyuben Berov divides them into two groups: those who remained ideologically within the existing bourgeois system and accepted capitalism, and those who sought a “third way” in the direction of a “cooperative society.” The latter group of agrarian movements is listed, country by country, in order of increasing radicalism in the following way: Hungary, Romania, Croatia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Most radical was the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union, which attained power at a revolutionary moment and began implementing a radical program and initiated a rural-urban confrontation. The author draws the conclusion that “third way” solutions—the drive to go beyond the existing capitalist system and bourgeois political establishments—were characteristic of countries with the following features: a less developed economy (measured by the percentage of the active population engaged in agriculture and the gross national product), a higher proportion of small-scale farmers, and a traditional social structure (such as the *zadruga*).¹²⁰ This is probably because tradition-bound peasants in “backward” (that is, non-market) conditions are more hostile toward capitalism, and because independent (and partly self-subsistent) peasants have a greater capacity for resistance. Such is perhaps the formula for “revolutionizing” the peasants sought by the Krestintern, in contrast with peasants in dependent conditions or those who were already drawn into the market exchange.

Alongside the common traits of the agrarian movements in the Balkans, there were important differences.¹²¹ They were due, among other things, to the different agrarian and political conditions in the respective countries, to the historical timing of their ascendance and the outlook of the leaders. Independent smallholders overwhelmingly prevailed in Bulgaria and Serbia, where fighting the exploitation of the village by the towns (and by the state) was high on the agenda. The Croatian Peasant Party started with the problem of big estates but had an ascending middle peasantry in its constituency. After the land reform in Yugoslavia, the big estates were divided up, and the party had a well-to-do peasantry to lean upon. The Romanian populists faced the “neo-serfdom” of the prewar period, and the Romanian Țărăniști still faced its consequences and were frustrated with the weakness of the peasantry after the reform. The Bulgarian agrarian leaders were authentically peasantist, as were the Radići in Croatia.

¹²⁰ Lyuben Berov, “The Idea of a ‘Cooperative Society’ in East European Peasant Movements during the Inter-war Period,” in *Modern Age—Modern Historian: In Memoriam Gyorgy Ranki (1930–1988)*, ed. Ferenc Glatz (Budapest: Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1990), 265–286.

¹²¹ A comparison between the Bulgarian and the Croatian peasant parties appears in Dimov, *Aleksandăr Stamboliyski*, 233–244.

By contrast, the Romanian Țărănist Party was created and led mostly by intellectuals and urban politicians, and only Ion Mihalache had previously been a village teacher. In every country, leaders and activists who engaged in politics gradually turned professional and "bourgeois."

One should note the general change of the peasant parties' social attitudes over time. They shifted from anger and resentment against exploitative landlords, towns, usurers and merchants toward concerns with making agriculture more productive and raising the living standards of the village to that of the towns. The "middle class" concept and the idea of peasant mediation between the "extremes" of labor and capital, socialism and liberalism are part of the same package. One may see this as a certain adaptation and moderation after the initial eruption on the political scene—the "Green Rising"—but also as a consequence of actual progress in the marketization of agriculture, accommodation to capitalism and an honest attempt to face the problems of economic backwardness. In the Croatian case this accommodation started much earlier because of the earlier advance in agriculture; in fact, the agrarian program of the Radići was moderate from the very beginning. The renunciation of the republican principle and accommodation to the monarchy (by the Croatian and the Bulgarian agrarians) points in the same direction. The Romanian Țărănists actually assisted in the return of Carol II to Romania. Of all Eastern European peasant movements, the one most rooted in the bourgeois establishment was the Czech agrarians, not least because they sought to express the interests of already developed, largely commercialized agriculture; but they are outside the scope of this work. The price of the accommodation was a certain "loss of (peasant) identity," and it is questionable to what extent such a peasant party was representative of peasant interests, name and origins notwithstanding.

The Balkan agrarian movements maintained different relations with nationalism. The Croatian Peasant Party, from the beginning, combined the social (peasantist) agenda with a national agenda of emancipation of the Croatian nation within the Habsburg Empire. The drawing of the peasants into the national movement, or rather, the formation of the nation on a peasant basis and entrusting a mass peasant party with the conduct of national affairs, was viewed by the Radići as the key to successful national integration. The national goal of attaining Croatian autonomy within a (federalized) Yugoslavia became a top priority, relegating the social dimension to the background, though it may be argued that the social problem was less acute in the agriculturally more advanced Croatia. The party was transformed from a peasant party into an all-national party with participation of all social strata, including the bourgeoisie, with a broad peasant base.

At the same time, its nationalism reflected back on the Serbian agrarians, who were generally more socially minded, but had to address the Croatian question, which presented an impediment to cooperation in an all-Yugoslav agrarian movement. The Romanian Țărănist Party had a social agenda with a national(ist) coloration, enhanced by the integration of the new lands (with foreign landowners) and the merger with the more nationalist Romanian National Party of Transylvania, but also by the generally right-wing intellectual and political atmosphere of interwar Romania.

The Bulgarian agrarians are the exception in that they were motivated by purely social concerns (though they did not lack national feeling). This was so not only because the national formation was already accomplished and its goal—a nation-state—already existed, but also because of the discrediting of the nationalist (irredentist) policies of the bourgeois parties in the unsuccessful wars. Stamboliyski renounced the traditional nationalist foreign policy and postwar revisionism in particular and went as far as to establish friendly relations with Yugoslavia, which had gained much of the Macedonian irredenta. This earned him the bitter hatred of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO), whose activities on both sides of the border were prohibited by the Niš agreement. The purely social (peasantist) character of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union is recognized by Dragoljub Jovanović in the following passage:

In its estatist ideology it was purer than the Croatian Peasant Party, in its stature it was stronger than the Serbian, Polish and the Romanian [peasant parties]. Free from nationalist romanticism, which the Croats have still not overcome, and which also hampers some of the Serbs to define themselves in an estatist and class sense, not having a division between Orthodox and Catholic, which harmed the unity of the Romanian National-Peasant Party, free from the ballast of numerous and rich agricultural organizations that hampered the Czechoslovakian Peasant Party, the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union was able to formulate a very advanced peasant-democratic program.¹²²

This very positive evaluation reveals, of course, that there was much that leftists could agree on.

Finally, the question can be posed about mutual influences, transfers and entanglements. The peasant parties were certainly aware of the activities of their counterparts in other countries, and news about them circulated in the party press. Some meetings and talks between peasant-

¹²² Jovanović, "Socijalizam i seljaštvo," 184.

tist leaders took place. For instance, Stamboliyski met Ion Mihalache and Virgil Magdearu on his tour of the European capitals, but he diplomatically declined a meeting with Stjepan Radić before traveling to Belgrade, though BANU had expressed support for the Croatian national cause.¹²³ Relations between BANU and the Croat Peasant Party were hampered by the pro-Yugoslav policies of Stamboliyski, who faced suspicions that he might be conspiring with Radić to gain influence in Macedonia. The leaders of the Romanian Peasant Party also maintained relations with other peasant parties, and reports about them appeared in the party press (for instance, in the newspaper *Aurora*).¹²⁴

More important are the ideological influences between the Balkan peasant parties, but they are very difficult to document, not least because the peasant leaders and ideologists rarely referred to other sources in their mostly journalistic writings and speeches. Occasionally works were translated, but far less were from Balkan agrarian authors than from Western ones. Inter-Balkan influences thus remain unclear and largely conjectural; they involved basic shared ideas, such as “cooperative society,” the “people’s state” and the “third way.” The influences of the Bulgarian agrarian movement upon its Serbian counterpart are the ones best documented, starting with the great impact of the Bulgarian example (ideology and program) on its formation and, later on, the exchanges and mutual influences between their leftist currents (Dragoljub Jovanović and Mihail Genovski) about the cooperative state and labor democracy. The Bulgarian agrarian movement had a strong impact on neighboring agrarian movements because it was the first to attain power on its own (a feat replicated only by the Romanian Țărăniști) and because it was initially radical. It directly influenced the Serbian Agrarian Party, which accepted the principle of class (“estate”) organization and a similar and quite radical program. It also influenced the Croatian and the Romanian peasant movements in a fundamental, though negative way, namely in alerting them to the dangers of the confrontation between classes (or estates) and between town and village. Both the Croatian Peasant Party and the Romanian Țărăniști rejected Stamboliyski’s confrontational “estatist theory” and insisted on the “non-class” character of the peasants, whether regarded as an

¹²³ Dimov, “Aleksandăr Stamboliyski i selskite,” 231–233; Vladislav Topalov, “Bulgaria and the Croatian Republican Agrarian Movement led by Stjepan Radić (November–December 1920),” *Études historiques* 9 (Sofia) (1979), 199–223.

¹²⁴ Ioan Scurtu, “Relationships of the Peasants’ Party of Romania with the Agrarian Parties of Central and South-East Europe (1918–1926),” in *Revue des études sud-est Européennes* 19 (1981), 31–39.

“undifferentiated mass” or the backbone of the nation (“the people”), and on the non-class (or class-transcendent) feature of their parties. Radić in particular regarded his party as a “movement” with the potential to encompass the whole Croatian nation, not just the peasants.¹²⁵ The Bulgarian Peasant National Union took the same course after its experiment with radical peasant rule ended.

Since the late 1920s some influence on Balkan agrarianism emanated from the Green International in Prague.¹²⁶ Following a 1920 initiative by Aleksandăr Stamboliyski, a loose and barely active International Agrarian Bureau of four agrarian parties was established in Prague from 1921 to 1925, actually with a pan-Slav orientation. It assumed a broader agrarian orientation in 1926 and was joined by twelve more parties within the next two years. It was defined as a center for information and dissemination of the ideas of agrarianism. After a preliminary conference in 1928, the International Agrarian Bureau (known as Green International) was established in Prague in 1929 with seventeen member parties. Karel Mečíř, a close friend of the agrarian premier of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Švehla, became general secretary. Unlike the Red International (the Comintern), the Green International did not have power over its members and did not direct and guide them but served to exchange information, to share experiences and enhance the sense of solidarity between the agrarian parties. Still, it did exercise some ideological influence through the leader of the Czechoslovak Republican Agrarian Party, Antonín Švehla, and his successor, Milan Hodža, the actual founders and driving forces of the Agrarian Bureau as presidents, whose works were circulated in the *Bulletin of the International Agrarian Bureau* in several languages (and some, like Švehla’s “Man and Soil,” were translated into other languages). The influences were mostly in the direction of a moderate and coalition-prone “middle class” agrarianism based on a peasant mystique, in favor of democracy, for peace and against communism.

The Krestintern (Red Peasant International), created in 1923 by the Comintern, also tried to establish influence over the Balkan (and Eastern European) peasants and tap their revolutionary potential for communist

¹²⁵ Banac, *The National Question*, 229.

¹²⁶ About the Green International, see Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*, 138–150; Heinz Haushofer, “Die Internationale organization der Bauernparteien,” in *Europäische Bauernparteien*, 668–690. An example of a hardline communist perspective is the work of M.M. Goranovich, *Krakh Zel'onogo Internatsionala* (Moscow: Nauka, 1967).

purposes.¹²⁷ While Marx and orthodox socialism were contemptuous of the peasants, Lenin recognized the enormous revolutionary potential of the peasantry in an underdeveloped country with a small proletariat and made use of it in the Russian Revolution, borrowing in the process from the Social Revolutionaries (*eseri*). Guided by the experience of the Russian Revolution (Lenin's theses of the "worker-peasant alliance") and the internal situation then prevailing in the Soviet Union, the Comintern and its creation, the Krestintern, made attempts to attract the (landless and poor) peasants and place the peasant parties in Eastern Europe under communist tutelage. The tactics varied from direct appeals to the peasants through the national communist parties (for "worker-peasant alliances") to "united fronts" with the agrarian parties plus manipulation of "national questions." Various "agrarian programs" were put forward with radical demands in the name of the (poor) peasants, while concealing the ultimate goal of nationalization (collectivization) of the land.¹²⁸ But the Krestintern had little success with the Balkan (and Eastern European) agrarian parties: the spectacular but short-lived membership of the Croatian Peasant Party and some failed alliances with Bulgarian leftist agrarian groups after the overthrow of Stamboliyski's government. Contrary to the communist ideologists' claims, the agrarians proved capable of autonomous action and did not seek communist tutelage. If they did not opt for a "third way" of their own, capitalism remained preferable for them to communism. And it was actually to communism that they fell victim after World War II.

¹²⁷ Basic studies of the attitude of the Western socialists and of the communists to the peasants and peasant movements are Mitrany, *Marx against the Peasant*; and Jackson, *Comintern and Peasant*. See also Reviakina, *Kominternät i selskite partii*.

¹²⁸ The purely tactical intention of these programs transpires through the instructions of the Krestintern functionary Ivan Ormanov, "Agrarno-selskiyat vâpros i Kominternät," in Ivan Ormanov, *Izbrani proizvedeniya* (Sofia: Partizdat, 1986), 232–259 (initially published under the pseudonym M. Gorov in *Agrarnye problemy*, no. 4–5 [1930], 22–48).

FASCISM IN SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE:
A COMPARISON BETWEEN ROMANIA'S LEGION OF
THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AND CROATIA'S USTAŠA

Constantin Iordachi

The spirit of sacrifice is essential! We all possess the most formidable dynamite, the most irresistible weapon, more powerful than tanks and rifles: our own ashes.

—Ion I. Moța¹

Knife, revolver, machine gun and time bomb, these are the harbinger bells of the dawn and the RESURRECTION OF THE INDEPENDENT CROATIAN STATE.

—Ante Pavelić²

The great conflagration of World War I, and the generalized social upheaval that followed, altered the nature of politics in Europe. The postwar political order that emerged was founded on the alliance of liberal parliamentary regimes organized under the Versailles Peace Treaties and supported by a system of collective security in the framework of the newly created League of Nations. Yet the pluralistic parliamentary regimes that emerged from the war were soon challenged by radical, anti-liberal, and revisionist political movements. Within the large and highly heterogeneous “family of authoritarians” in interwar Europe,³ fascist movements posed the most significant challenge to liberal democracies. True, with a few notable exceptions—such as Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany—the majority of fascist movements were either successfully marginalized in consolidated democracies or effectively blocked from obtaining power in authoritarian regimes. Yet even if often curtailed, these movements had a profound effect on the evolution of political regimes and the dominant style of politics in Europe, prompting scholars to dub the interwar period

¹ Ion I. Moța, “Spasmul și concluziile sale,” in *Almanahul Societății “Petru Maior”* (Cluj: Cartea Românească, 1929), 207.

² Ante Pavelić, “Ropstvo je dodijalo,” *Ustaša. Vjesnik hrvatskih revolucionaraca* (February 1932), 1.

³ Michael Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), vii–viii, 24, 31.

the “era of fascism.”⁴ Under the weight of fascist movements, coupled with political and military pressure from Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, unconsolidated democracies crumbled like a house of cards. Within two decades, only a few liberal democracies in Europe had survived. The ensuing confrontation between liberal democracy and fascism pushed the continent into a war that flared into a new world conflagration.

The new nation-states that emerged from the collapsed multinational empires in interwar Southeastern Europe, and more generally, in Central Europe, were no exception to this Europe-wide phenomenon. On the contrary, the traumatic experience of the Great War, the major social-political upheaval and territorial dislocations the war provoked, and the persistence of acute interethnic conflicts led to the proliferation of a wide range of conservative authoritarian, radical right-wing, and fascist movements and parties in the region.⁵

First, it should be noted that the war experience in the Balkans was much longer than that in Western Europe. Military confrontations started with the two Balkan wars (1912–1913), continued with World War I (1914–1918) and extended well afterward with the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922). Second, World War I divided the Balkan states into rival parties. Romania, Serbia and Greece fought on the side of the Entente, while Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire fought on the side of the Central Powers, further reinforcing the regional conflicts manifest in the previous Balkan conflagrations. Third, in Southeastern Europe the impact of the Great War was even more profound than in other parts of the continent. Balkan countries experienced all the vicissitudes of prolonged foreign military occupation

⁴ Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism: Action Française, Italian Fascism, National Socialism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), first published in German as *Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche: die Action française, der italienische Faschismus, der Nationalsozialismus* (Munich: R. Piper, 1963).

⁵ On the relationship between fascism and the non-fascist radical Right, see Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber, eds., *The European Right: A Historical Profile* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965); Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Martin Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe, 1919–1945* (Harlow: Longman, 2000); and Peter Davies and Derek Lynch, *The Routledge Companion to Fascism and the Far Right* (New York: Routledge, 2002). On contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, see Sabrina P. Ramet, *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999). On fascism and the conservative Right, see Martin Blinkhorn, ed., *Fascists and Conservatives: The Radical Right and the Establishment in Twentieth-Century Europe* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990). For a historical typology of the three faces of authoritarian nationalism (fascism, the radical Right and the conservative Right), see Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 15.

(Austro-Hungarian in the case of Serbia; German, Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian in the case of Romania; and Italian, British, French and Greek in the case of the Ottoman Empire). Fourth, and most importantly for the present analysis, postwar Balkan states exhibited most of the societal factors that generally facilitated the emergence of fascism. The most important of these are structural, regional and ethno-political, cleavages related to a specific stage of the nation-building process, that of regional unification and national integration of disparate provinces or populations; a peculiar intellectual context that could serve as a laboratory for extremist political ideas; the invocation of grave, be they “tangible” or “perceived,” geopolitical threats justifying visions of the nation as being a “fortress under siege;” a specific national ideology centered on the idea of “victimhood nationalism;”⁶ and unconsolidated pluralistic political regimes that would allow incipient fascist movements to thrive and challenge the existing political order.

Due to this combination of factors, the gallery of radical political movements in the interwar Balkans is broad and complex. Their great numbers, the fluid character of their ideologies, and their organizational instability defy efforts to neatly separate, at the level of “real” politics, fascist movements from the larger family of radical right-wing parties. Among the most significant radical right-wing and fascist movements in the Balkans—which have been the subject of scholarly controversies and debates—are Legiunea “Arhanghelului Mihail” (the Legion of the Archangel Michael), also known as Garda de Fier (Iron Guard) in Romania; Organizacija Jugoslavenskih Nacionalista (Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists) or Orjuna, Jugoslovenski narodni pokret “Zbor” (Yugoslav National Movement “Zbor”) or Zbor, and Ustaša–Hrvatski Revolucionarni Pokret (Ustaša–Croatian Revolutionary Movement) in Yugoslavia; Narodno sotsialno dvizhenie (National Social Movement), Săyuz na bălgarskite natsionalni legioni (Union of the Bulgarian National Legions or Legions), and Ratnichestvo za napredăka na bălgarshtinata (the Warriors for the Advancement of the Bulgarian Spirit, or Ratniks) in Bulgaria; and Elliniko Ethniko Sosialistiko Komma (the Greek National Socialist Party), Ethniki Enosi Ellados (EEE) (the National Union of Greece), Sidira Eirini (Iron Peace), Triaina (Trident), and Ethniko Kyriarcho Kratos (National Sovereign State) in Greece; and the Partia Fashiste e Shqipërisë—PFSh

⁶ On this concept, see Jie-Hyun Lim, “Victimhood Nationalism and History Reconciliation in East Asia,” *History Compass* 8, no. 1 (January 2010), 1–10.

(the Albanian Fascist Party), the Guard of Great Albania and the Albanian National Socialist Party in Albania. If we add to these movements the range of fascist or 'para-fascist' regimes⁷ established in the region during World War II under Nazi or Fascist patronage—most notably the short lived National-Legionary State in Romania or the longer-lasting regime of the Ustaša in Croatia—we have a wide territory of historical investigation.

The analysis of this complex set of ideologies, movements, and regimes poses great challenges to historians and social scientists, since it requires detailed empirical knowledge as well as clear conceptual definitions and criteria of taxonomical classification. Many of these movements were rather small. They displayed amorphous political doctrines, suffered from factionalism and inadequate leadership, and most often failed to become prominent mass political forces bidding for power. Using a rigorous ideal-type definition of generic fascism, they can hardly be classified as fully or "genuinely" fascist but should be placed in an intermediate taxonomic category, as hybrids between fascism and the radical Right.⁸ Others, however, elaborated distinct revolutionary ideologies, built strong paramilitary units supported by a large body of fanatical followers, and even managed, in varying degrees, to implement their political visions of national rebirth and regeneration within totalitarian political regimes, conducting genocidal policies against their countries' ethnic minorities. Despite these movements' obvious fascist character, Western scholars have often ignored them or relegated them to the periphery of fascism—labeling them "minor," "deviant" or "false"—in view of their location in a "backward region" or their failure to build independent, self-sustaining

⁷ The term "para-fascist" was first advanced by Griffin in *The Nature of Fascism*, 121, to denote "an 'alteration, perversion, simulation (Oxford English Dictionary) of 'real fascism'" by related yet not entirely fascist movements or regimes; for a further elaboration of the term and its application to regimes situated in the grey taxonomic zone between fascism and authoritarianism, see Aristotle Kallis (2003) "'Fascism', 'Para-fascism' and 'Fascistization': On the Similarities of Three Conceptual Categories," *European History Quarterly*, 33/2: 219–250. In my approach, I generally favor the terms 'ideological hybrids' and 'hybridization' to the term para-fascism, since the latter tends to connote a residual taxonomical category. Or, social scientists are not only interested in how ideologies relate to abstract, ideal-type definition, but also how they creatively combine heterogeneous elements, in real life. On the concept of hybridity, see footnote 8.

⁸ The concept of hybridity, meaning mixture, was first applied to linguistics, biology, and racial theories; more recently, it has been applied by post-colonial scholars to popular or national cultures. For a theoretical perspective on the concept of hybridity and its relevance for understanding the composite nature of modern national identities and cultures, see Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation," in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291–322.

and long-lasting regimes. I argue that, in so doing, they have missed or marginalized a vital part of far-right politics in interwar Europe, without which comparative research results remain partial and incomplete.

Needless to say, granting proper historiographical attention to fascism in the Balkans is not meant to rehabilitate this radical political phenomenon, or—*horribile dictu*—to honor the Balkans for its “genuine” fascism, as a confirmation of its political “modernity” or “synchronicity,” and thus of its European character. Neither is this a masochistic ambition to add to the European gallery of fascist bestiaries or to relocate the origins of fascism in the “violent” Balkans, as Orientalizing perspectives do.⁹ My endeavor, informed by the most recent debates on generic fascism, is based on the assumption that the study of fascist movements and regimes in the Balkans in particular, and in Central Europe in general, is essential to the more general scholarly effort to understand radical politics in interwar Europe. A more concerted analytical focus on this topic would add to our understanding of important issues pertaining to patterns of nation- and state-building, nationalist mass mobilization and the dominant myths, rites and rituals associated with mass politics and its aestheticization, charismatic leadership, paramilitarism, anti-Semitism, racism, political religions and totalitarianism, to name but a few. In addition, the analysis of fascism is particularly important nowadays, when far-right movements are reviving across Europe, many of them directly

⁹ Shocked by the outpouring of violence in the wartime Balkans, much of it inflicted by the Croatian Ustaša, a U.S. analyst portrayed Ante Pavelić as an “international gangster” representative of “the lunatic fringe of Balkan life.” See a report to the Headquarters, Counter Intelligence Corps, Allied Forces Headquarters APO 512, authored by Special Agent Robert Clayton Mudd and approved by Edwin F. Cowan, CIC Chief, on January 30, 1947, <http://www.jasenovac-info.com/cd/biblioteka/Pavelićpapers/Pavelić/apo011.html>. Such stereotypes of the Balkans as a realm of endemic violence found their locus in literature as well. In his largely fictitious travelogue on Nazi-dominated Eastern Europe, titled *Kaputt*, Italian writer Curzio Malaparte depicted Pavelić as a bloodthirsty tyrant who is presented every morning with a fresh basket full of human eyeballs. See Curzio Malaparte, “A Basket of Oysters,” *Kaputt*, afterword by Dan Hofstadter (New York: New York Review Books; Berkeley, CA: distributed by Publishers Group West, 2005), 268–278 (first published—Naples: Casella, 1944; first English translation—New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1946). This fictitious account is often taken as fact and invoked as evidence of the Ustaša’s barbarian nature. More recently, stereotypes on violence in the Balkans have been reinforced by the massacres committed during the wars accompanying Yugoslavia’s disintegration in the 1990s. In his notorious *Balkan Ghosts: A Journey through History* (London, 1994), Robert Kaplan goes as far as to argue that “Nazism, for instance, *can claim Balkan origins*. Among the flophouses of Vienna, a breeding ground of ethnic resentments close to the southern Slavic world, Hitler learned how to hate so infectiously” (p. xxiii, my emphasis).

nurtured by the legacy of interwar fascism. In this context, the exposure of the illiberal, racist and violent nature of fascism becomes a scholarly as well as a civic imperative.

The aim of this paper is to provide comparative perspectives on fascism in the interwar and wartime Balkans, in an effort to integrate fascist movements and regimes in this region more firmly within the realm of mainstream fascist studies. The paper is structured in two inter-related parts. Part One provides an overview of the literature on generic or historic fascism published in English in the last decades—with a focus on new transnational perspectives—and concludes that fascism in the interwar Balkans has remained an under-researched, marginalized topic. This part continues with a thorough analysis of the local historiography on fascism in four countries in the region, Romania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and Greece. I identify the main features of the communist historiography on fascism and contrast it with the new trends that have occurred in this field of study in the post-communist period.

After this historiographical overview, Part Two focuses in detail on a comparison between the Romanian Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Croatian Ustaša. I argue that these movements were the most important fascist organizations in the interwar Balkans, given their articulated ideology, their impact on the existing political systems in Romania and Yugoslavia, respectively, and their rise to power and attempt to create long-lasting regimes. The section explores several key issues that I believe are especially useful to compare: the origins of the two movements; their charismatic nature, with a focus on their leaders, organization and style of politics; their employment of terrorist methods; the cult of the martyrs; their racial legislation and genocidal policies toward ethnic minorities; and the relations between their ideology and religion in general, and established churches in particular. In conclusion, I evaluate the main features of fascism in the Balkans by placing it in the wider European context. My ultimate aim is to identify a new research agenda for studying fascism comparatively, potentially contributing to the fine-tuning or even the substantial modification of the existing explanatory paradigms. More specifically, I argue that comparative research on fascism should be set on new theoretical and methodological foundations, by incorporating novel transnational perspectives such as shared and entangled history and *histoire croisée*. It is my conviction that regional explorations of fascism might function as a laboratory for methodological innovation and as a field of experimentation and interaction of scholars from various disciplines and national historiographic traditions. This analytical effort

would also contribute to a greater interaction and convergence between scholarly research traditions in Eastern and Western Europe. It would potentially lead to the rejuvenation of fascist studies by renewing their thematic scope and by redirecting research from the prevailing Weberian ideal-type methodology, fixated on the fascist "ideological minimum," to new comparative analyses of historical fascism focusing on the triad *ideology-movements-regimes*.

PART I: COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON FASCISM: HISTORIOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVES

The evolution of comparative fascist studies on and in Southeastern Europe cannot be fully understood without considering the major trends that characterized the academic literature on fascism at European and global levels. This century-old field has evolved in several distinct phases, dominated by distinct disciplinary influences and analytical foci.¹⁰ To understand these trends, one needs to consider from the outset that,

¹⁰ For overviews of fascist studies, see Renzo de Felice, ed., *Il Fascismo: le interpretazioni dei contemporanei e degli storici* (Rome: Laterza, 1970); Renzo de Felice, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1977); A. James Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press,; new edition: New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997); Emilio Gentile, "Fascism in Italian Historiography: In Search of an Individual Historical Identity," *Journal of Contemporary History* 21 (1986), 179–208; Emilio Gentile, "The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1, no. 1 (2000), 18–55; Emilio Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion: Definitions and Critical Reflections on Criticism of an Interpretation," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (2004), 326–375; Emilio Gentile, "Political Religion: A Concept and its Critics—a Critical Survey," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 1 (June 2005), 19–32; Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Roger Griffin, "The Primacy of Culture: The Current Growth (or Manufacture) of Consensus within Fascist Studies," *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 1 (2002), 21–43; Roger Griffin, "Introduction: God's Counterfeiters? Investigating the Triad of Fascism, Totalitarianism, and (Political) Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (2004), 291–326; Roger Griffin, "Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile's Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6, no. 1 (2005), 33–52; Aristotle A. Kallis, *Fascism: A Reader. Historians and Interpretations of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 2002); Aristotle A. Kallis, "Studying Fascism in Epochal and Diachronic Terms: Ideological Production, Political Experience and the Quest for 'Consensus,'" *European History Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (2004), 9–42; Andreas Umland, "Concepts of Fascism in Contemporary Russia and the West," *Political Studies Review* 3 (2004), 34–49; and Constantin Iordachi, "Comparative Fascist Studies: An Introduction," in *Comparative Fascist Studies: New Perspectives*, ed. Constantin Iordachi (London: Routledge, 2009), 1–50.

since fascist movements existed in almost all European countries in the interwar period, the study of fascism is, in essence, an exercise in comparative history. The comparative method thus proves indispensable for understanding fascism, enabling scholars to identify the similarities fascist movements share with each other as well as their differences.

The first comparative perspectives on fascism were advanced in the 1920s and 1930s in response to the establishment and consolidation of fascist regimes in Italy and then in Germany, and the emergence of significant fascist mass movements in other European countries. At this stage, comparative research on fascism was dominated, by and large, by Marxist-Leninist historiographic perspectives. Initially, the unexpected emergence of a novel political ideology in European politics caught Marxist-Leninist thinkers by surprise. They had difficulties in integrating fascism into their rigid teleological scheme of historical progress, which posited a direct and inevitable transition from capitalism to socialism. After a brief period of confusion, Marxist-Leninist thinkers quickly advanced a general “theory” of fascism. This ambitious, all-encompassing theory strove to explain fascism’s ideological roots, the structural and social-political conditions favoring the emergence of fascist movements, the evolution of these movements over time, their social composition, the main features of fascist regimes, and their domestic and foreign policy. The theory was mostly elaborated, with various emphases, by prominent theoreticians such as Leon Trotsky,¹¹ Georgi Dimitrov,¹² Rajani Palme Dutt¹³ and Palmiro Togliatti, among others.¹⁴ Gradually, a Marxist—or more accurately, at this time, a Stalinist—dogma on fascism was crystallized during Cominform meetings, eventually reduced to a number of rigid, ideologically driven statements. The Bulgarian Georgi Dimitrov articulated this view, arguing that fascist regimes were the last stage of capitalist class rule, “a *substitution* of one state form of class domination of the bourgeoisie—

¹¹ Leon Trotsky, *Fascism: What It Is; How to Fight It* (New York: Pioneer, 1944).

¹² Georgi Dimitrov, “The Fascist Offensive and the Tasks of the Communist International in the Struggle of the Working Class against Fascism,” main report delivered at the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, August 2, 1935, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm; Georgi Dimitrov, *Selected Works*, 2 vols. (Sofia: Foreign Languages Press, 1967); Georgi Dimitrov, *Against Fascism and War* (New York: International Publisher, 2002).

¹³ Rajani Palme Dutt, *Fascism and Social Revolution* (New York: International Press, 1934).

¹⁴ Palmiro Togliatti, *Sul fascismo* (Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2004).

bourgeois democracy—by another form—open terrorist dictatorship.”¹⁵ The essence of the new type of regime was the close relationship between the fascist government and big businesses, an idea synthesized by Dimitrov in the famous phrase: “Fascism is the power of finance capital itself.” Key to this approach was the claim that fascism had no genuine mass appeal; its popularity was based on demagoguery and deception, capitalizing on the “most urgent needs and demands” of the masses but also on “their sense of justice and sometimes even on their revolutionary traditions.” The fascist regime was, ultimately, a form of “political gangsterism, a system of provocation and torture,” based on “social demagoguery, corruption and active white terror.”¹⁶

Building on these initial positions, the Marxist historiography on fascism has been extremely prolific but also highly heterogeneous. One can distinguish different schools of Marxist thought, most notably the Austrian, British, Italian, German and the distinct Soviet and East European branches of Marxism. Each of these schools displayed its own intellectual traditions and emphases, which were also evident in the way they approached and defined fascism. Especially after World War II, following on the footsteps of idiosyncratic Marxist thinkers of the interwar period, new generations of Marxist thinkers questioned, from a critical stance, the main tenets of the interwar Stalinist dogma on fascism and put forward new (neo-)Marxist interpretations.¹⁷ Many of these perspectives were theoretically insightful and methodologically innovative. Yet they nevertheless remained confined within the official Stalinist interpretation of fascism, as they continued to stress the statist, dictatorial dimension of fascist regimes, while at the same time paying scant attention to the

¹⁵ Dimitrov, “The Fascist Offensive,” http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/dimitrov/works/1935/08_02.htm.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Frosini Fabio-Liguori, ed., *Le parole di Gramsci. Per un lessico dei Quaderni del carcere* (Rome: Carocci, 2004). See also Walter L. Adamson, “Gramsci’s Interpretation of Fascism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41, no. 4 (1980), 615–633, among others. For comprehensive overviews of Marxist ideas about fascism, see Nicos Poulantzas, *Fascism and Dictatorship* (London: New Left Books, 1974). For a critical overview of the late-1970s Marxist interpretation of fascism, see Bernt Hagtvet and Reinhard Kühnl, “Contemporary Approaches to Fascism: A Survey of Paradigms,” in *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, eds. Stein Ugelvik Larson, Bernt Hagtvet and Jan Petter Myklebust (Bergen, Oslo and Tromsø: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), 42–45; David Beetham, *Marxists in Face of Fascism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983); and A. James Gregor, *The Faces of Janus: Marxism and Fascism in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), including a detailed chronology of stages of research and a presentation of dominant theories.

nationalist, populist and revolutionary character of the fascist movements on which these regimes were built. Moreover, the almost exclusive emphasis on the fascists' material interests and economic "base" made Marxist scholars less receptive to the idea of a specific fascist ideology and culture that could account for fascism's mass appeal. Overall, Marxist historiography has the merit of providing an initial theoretical model and comparative framework for analyzing fascism at the transnational level, emphasizing similarities and differences among "varieties of fascism" but also their cross-border entanglements and mutual influences. At the same time, however, the rigid Marxist schemata of interpreting fascism as a reactionary regime did not allow researchers to fully grasp the modernity of fascist ideology, and to account for the genuine mass appeal of fascist movements, as well as their innovative techniques of mass mobilization, organization and propaganda.

Unfortunately, after World War II, comparative studies declined, as scholars of fascism concentrated almost exclusively on the "core" case study of Nazi Germany and, to a lesser extent, of Fascist Italy, considered the main culprits for the devastating war. Meanwhile, other, arguably peripheral allies of the Axis powers fell into relative oblivion, with only a few succinct overviews authored by East European émigré historians. A second wave of comparative fascist studies was to occur only in the mid-1960s and 1970s, this time outside of the Marxist camp. Galvanized by pioneering scholars such as Ernst Nolte in Germany; Eugen Weber, Walter Laqueur, George L. Mosse and Juan J. Linz in the United States; and Renzo de Felice in Italy, this wave of research on fascism resulted in groundbreaking comparative works, combining novel empirical contributions with interdisciplinary theoretical insights from the fields of history, sociology and political science.¹⁸ Stimulated also by the new theoretical

¹⁸ Walter Laqueur and George L. Mosse, eds., *International Fascism, 1920–1945* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); S.J. Woolf, ed. *The Nature of Fascism* (New York: Random House, 1968); S.J. Woolf, ed., *European Fascism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1968); Nathaniel Greene, ed., *Fascism: An Anthology* (New York: Crowell, 1968); John Weiss, ed., *Nazis and Fascists in Europe, 1918–1945* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1969); Michael A. Ledeen, "Renzo de Felice and the Controversy over Italian Fascism," *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976), 269–283; Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism*; Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide; Analyses, Interpretations, Bibliography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976). For the most complete, synthetic works on historical fascism, see Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980); and Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*.

models of totalitarianism advanced in the late 1950s by Hannah Arendt,¹⁹ and Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski,²⁰ the departure from the hegemonic Marxist interpretation of fascism led to an exponential proliferation of the academic literature on fascism. This research boom also opened the floor to a plethora of rival explanatory theories on fascism. A comprehensive survey of fascist studies published in 1980 by Bernt Hagtvet and Reinhard Kühnl identified no less than eleven rival and mutually exclusive monocausal theories of fascism, each of them favoring a different major cause for the rise of interwar fascism.²¹ These profound disagreements over the nature of fascism frustrated comparative endeavors; consequently, the 1980s were mainly characterized by intensive debates over the most appropriate definition of the fascist ideology.

In the 1990s, after over a decade of intense, ideologically driven debates on fascism, and in reaction to the prevailing confusion manifest in the field,²² a new generation of scholars refocused the agenda of fascist studies from the prevailing attempt to provide an explanation of fascism to an attempt to provide a conceptual understanding of its main features.²³ Thus, while in previous decades students of fascism attempted to produce "all-embracing" sociological theories in order to explain the ideological origins, social basis and political trajectory of interwar fascism, in the 1990s scholars of fascism limited their scope to building flexible Weberian ideal-type models of fascism, aiming only to capture its "main attributes" or "essence," the so-called "fascist ideological minimum."²⁴ The new analytical endeavor opened a sharp debate in fascist studies over the most suitable methodological strategy for building an ideal-type model of 'generic' or 'universal' fascism and for representing its cluster of traits.

¹⁹ Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1951).

²⁰ See Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 2nd rev. ed. by Carl J. Friedrich (New York: Praeger, 1965); and Carl J. Friedrich, ed., *Totalitarianism* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964).

²¹ See Hagtvet and Kühnl, "Contemporary Approaches to Fascism: A Survey of Paradigms," in *Who Were the Fascists?* eds. Larson, Hagtvet and Myklebust, 26–51.

²² Gilbert Allardyce, "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept," *American Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (1979), 367–388. For a later reappraisal, see Timothy M. Mason, "Whatever Happened to 'Fascism'?" *Radical History Review* 49 (1991), 89–98.

²³ For this distinction, see Larsen Ugelvik Stein, "Was There Fascism outside Europe? Diffusion from Europe and Domestic Impulses," in Ugelvik Larsen Stein, ed., *Fascism outside Europe* (Boulder, CO: Social Science Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, New York, 2001), 713.

²⁴ For this approach, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*.

Leading scholars of fascism employed different methodological strategies for building heuristic models of fascism, as a comprehensive descriptive definition of average characteristics;²⁵ a tripartite typology of features;²⁶ an ideological core;²⁷ an ideological core supplemented by sociological features;²⁸ a series of processes and stages;²⁹ or an ideological matrix.³⁰

A detailed discussion of these theoretical models is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffices to mention however that, overall, this rich debate has led to a breakthrough in research on generic fascism. Although these alternative models are in many ways divergent, a growing research convergence is emerging in fascist studies, around the culturalist paradigms put forward by researchers such as George Mosse, Stanley G. Payne, Emilio Gentile, Robert Eatwell and Roger Griffin, to name but a few. In a radical departure from the Marxist dogma that dominated fascist studies in the first postwar decades, the proponents of the new approach to fascism attempt to “take fascism seriously” and to study it “from the inside out,”³¹ acknowledging “the primacy of culture” over politics, the revolutionary nature of fascism and its mass appeal based on the mobilizing “mythical core” of national rebirth, which Griffin perceptively named the *palingenetic myth* of rebirth and regeneration of the nation.³²

Equally important, approaching fascism as a “generic” or “universal” phenomenon provided a much-needed tool but also a stimulus for identifying and analyzing non-Western forms of fascism as well. In this context, informed by my own research work on fascism in Central Europe and the Balkans, but also by that of a new generation of local historians, I argue

²⁵ See Emilio Gentile's work: “Fascism as Political Religion,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 25, nos. 2–3 (1990), 229–251; *Il culto del littorio: la sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista* (Rome: Laterza, 1993); *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); “The Sacralisation of Politics,” 18–55; *Fascismo. Storia e Interpretazione* (Rome: Laterza, 2002); and “Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion,” 326–375.

²⁶ See Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*; and Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*.

²⁷ See Roger Griffin's work: *The Nature of Fascism*; *Fascism*; and *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

²⁸ Mann, *Fascists*.

²⁹ See Robert O. Paxton, “The Five Stages of Fascism,” *Journal of Modern History* 70, no. 1 (1998), 1–23; Robert O. Paxton, *The Anatomy of Fascism* (London: Allen Lane, 2004).

³⁰ See Roger Eatwell, “On Defining the ‘Fascist Minimum’: The Centrality of Ideology,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 1, no. 3 (1996), 303–319.

³¹ George L. Mosse, “Toward a General Theory of Fascism,” in *The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1999), x.

³² See Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*; and Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*.

that a much needed but also heuristically rewarding turning point in the field of comparative fascist studies would be to depart from the narrow concentration on "core" forms of historical fascism and to explore more systematically the history of other, non-Western, fascist movements, in an effort to fully integrate them within this research field. To understand this stringent need, the following section provides a brief overview of studies on fascism outside Western Europe.

1.1. *Locating Non-Western Fascism: From Typologies to "Topologies"*

What has been the track record of comparative research on the history of fascism in non-Western regions? As mentioned above, in the first postwar decades, although claiming to approach fascism as a general, Europe-wide phenomenon, early postwar anthologies of fascism concentrated mostly on Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, or at best on Western Europe, including the case studies of France, Spain, Great Britain and the Low Countries. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the first general overviews on European fascism managed to overcome, for the first time, the almost exclusive geographic focus on Western Europe and included chapters on the history of related political movements elsewhere on the continent.³³ This trend continued into the 1980s, when scholars of fascism gradually expanded their geographical focus to other regions of the world, including Africa (South Africa), South and North America (Chile, Argentina, Brazil, the United States) and even Asia (Japan).³⁴

³³ See Eugen Weber, *Varieties of Fascism: Doctrines of Revolution in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand, 1964); Peter Sugar, ed., *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Clio, 1971); Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*.

³⁴ Among these case studies, fascism in Japan has attracted considerable attention. See Masao Maruyama, "The Ideology and Dynamics of Japanese Fascism," in *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics*, ed. Ivan Morris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 25–83; Ivan Morris, ed., *Japan 1931–1945: Militarism, Fascism, Japanism?* (Boston: Heath, 1963); O. Tanin and E. Yohan, *Militarism and Fascism in Japan* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973); George Macklin Wilson, "A New Look at the Problem of 'Japanese Fascism,'" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 10, no. 4 (1968), 401–412; Peter Duus and Daniel I. Okimoto, "Fascism and the History of Prewar Japan: The Failure of a Concept," *Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 1 (1979), 65–76; Gregory J. Kasza, "Fascism from Below? A Comparative Perspective on the Japanese Right, 1931–1936," *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 4 (1984), 607–629. For a comparison with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, see Heinz Lubasz, ed., *Fascism: Three Major Regimes* (New York: Wiley, 1973). On Fascism in Chile, see Mario Sznajder, "A Case of Non-European Fascism: Chilean National Socialism in the 1930s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28, no. 2 (1993), 269–296. On fascism in the United States, see Peter H. Amann, "Vigilante Fascism: The Black Legion as an American Hybrid,"

The extension of the research agenda on fascism to new historical case studies in various geographical regions has raised new analytical questions for researchers: What is the relation between general or universal fascist features and local or particular ones? How do we deal with specific national or regional features of fascism? Should one discard them as "deviationist" or try to understand them in their own right, as original yet genuine forms of far-right extremism?

One answer to these issues was to devise typological classifications of "varieties of fascism," a very difficult task given the great number of historical examples, their complexity and the multiple analytical levels at which their history could be approached. The typological approach to historical fascism originated, in fact, in the interwar period, in the field of political theory as well as practice. The issue of commonalities and diversity within the fascist political camp in-the-making was, in fact, a constant theme of reflection for fascist leaders themselves. In 1928 an International Center for the Study of Fascism (*Centre International d'Etudes sur le Fascisme*, CINEF), established in Lausanne, Switzerland, brought together fascist intellectuals from various European countries with the aim of promoting the doctrine of "universal fascism," transcending national differences or antagonisms within the fascist camp.³⁵ In practice, however, the unity and cohesion of fascist movements across Europe was undermined by the geopolitical rivalry between Italian Fascism and German National Socialism and by the national peculiarities and divergent goals displayed by various fascist movements active in interwar Europe. The existence of these cleavages was amply proven by the fact that two pan-fascist conferences organized in 1934 and 1935, in Montreux, Switzerland, by the Action Committees for the Universality of Rome (*Comitati d'Azione per l'Universalita di Roma*, CAUR), failed to establish a Fascist International and to forge a consensus over the main features and agenda of "universal fascism."³⁶ The balance between universalism and particularism remained a central ideological preoccupation of fascist leaders. In 1936 Oswald Mosley,

Comparative Studies in Society and History 25, no. 3 (1983), 490–524; and Morris Schonbach, *Native American Fascism during the 1930s and 1940s* (New York: Garland, 1987).

³⁵ See CINEF, *A Survey of Fascism: The Year Book of the International Centre of Fascist Studies*, vol. 1 (London and Aylesbury: Ernest Benn Limited, Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd., 1928). For the secretary general's view on fascism, see James Strachey Barnes: *The Universal Aspects of Fascism*, with a preface by Benito Mussolini (London: Williams and Norgate, 1928); and *Fascism* (London: Butterworth, 1931).

³⁶ See Michael Ledeen, *Universal Fascism: The Theory and Practice of the Fascist International, 1928–1936* (New York: H. Fertig, 1972).

the leader of the British National Union, acknowledged the international character of fascism—in his view the most modern, up-to-date political project of the time—but also emphasized the national leaning of fascism as an expression of the national character of the given people:

The main difference is that they are Italian or German and that we are British. From this all other differences follow. Fascism in essence is a national creed finding a different national expression and method in each nation. For this reason, Fascist Movements in each country vary more than Socialist or Communist Movements, which are international.³⁷

On the non-fascist side of the political spectrum, the first typological approach to fascism had its roots in the Marxist theory of fascism. Marxist thinkers were quick to grasp the international nature of fascism. As early as 1923, Karl Radek, the secretary of the Comintern, warned that

Fascism is no longer a fruit peculiar to Italian soil, but an international phenomenon. Italy is merely the first country where the Fascisti have seized the government, just as Russia is the first country where the proletariat has seized power. But the Fascist flood is rising in Germany, in Czechoslovakia, and is beginning to stir in the United States, and France, and Austria.³⁸

Faced with the rapid proliferation and growth of fascist movements in interwar Europe, Marxists attempted to explain the relationship between the local and the generic features of this phenomenon. In 1935 Georgi Dimitrov argued, “The development of fascism, and the fascist dictatorship itself, assume *different forms* in different countries, according to historical, social and economic conditions and to the national peculiarities, and the international position of the given country.” Dimitrov advanced a nascent typology of fascist movements and regimes, singling out Nazi Germany as “the most reactionary” form of fascism. But the Stalinist definition of fascism promoted by the Comintern stretched the concept of fascism to include social-democratic parties (called by the Comintern, until the mid-1930s, *social fascists*), and later even conservative authoritarian regimes, such as that of Horthy in Hungary or Pilsudski in Poland, thus generating confusion rather than clarity in the field.

Outside the Marxist camp, the typological approach to fascism was pioneered in the 1960s by the German historian Ernst Nolte. In his work,

³⁷ See Oswald Mosley, *Fascism: 100 Questions Asked and Answered* (London: BUF Publications, 1936), 9.

³⁸ Karl Radek, “Fascism and Communism” (1923), available at the Marxist Internet Archive, <http://marxism.halkcephesi.net/Radek%20Karl/>.

Nolte advocated a generic definition of fascism, but he doubted that a unified history of European fascism could ever be written. Instead, he recommended a typological approach to the topic as “more promising and appropriate,” since “it offers empirical material unlimited scope for verification.”³⁹ Using multiple poles of differentiation, such as authoritarian or totalitarian features, nationalist or socialist features, particular or universal tendencies, Nolte classified interwar fascist movements along four main positions: 1) the “not-yet-fascist” or pre-fascist movements on the lower pole; 2) early fascist movements at the “first point of the inner area;” 3) “normal fascism” in the center, and 4) radical fascist movements on the upper pole.⁴⁰

Emulating Nolte’s approach, other analysts classified fascist movements according to their genesis and chronology, distinguishing between proto- (or pre-) fascism, early fascism, interwar fascism and post-1945 neo-fascism.⁴¹ Others took into account regional patterns of the emergence and development of fascist movements and regimes, thus operating with a combination of a field of study (fascism) and traditions of area studies. This approach has its merits insofar as it pointed out the existence of certain regional features of fascist movements in various regions, generated by common historical legacies or geopolitical contexts. Useful as it was, though, the regional approach to fascism was marred from the onset by numerous methodological traps. Thus, building uncritically on regional resemblances of fascist movements, some scholars used regional labels to stand not for geographical denominations but for distinct analytical types of fascism, thus moving from typologies to what one might call *topologies* of fascism (from the Greek *topos*, meaning place). Arguing that regional differences were more salient than common features or other criteria of differentiation, they thus distinguished between “Western European fascism”⁴²

³⁹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 459.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 459–461.

⁴¹ On proto-fascism, see the debate on the Union of Russian People and the Black Hundred in Russia in Hans Rogger, “Was There a Russian Fascism? The Union of Russian People,” *Journal of Modern History* 36, no. 4 (1964), 398–415; Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993). On neo-fascism, see A. James Gregor, *The Search for Neofascism: The Use and Abuse of Social Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁴² H.R. Kedward, *Fascism in Western Europe, 1900–45* (New York: New York University Press, 1971); Stanley H. Payne, “Fascism in Western Europe,” in Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader’s Guide*, 295–311.

"East European fascism,"⁴³ "Balkan fascism,"⁴⁴ "Mediterranean fascism"⁴⁵ or "Latin fascism" (the latter focusing on dictatorial regimes in Italy, Spain and Portugal, to which one might also add France and Romania), and "Third World fascism" in developing countries.⁴⁶

The most important distinction was made between "Eastern European fascism" and "Western European fascism." In line with the Cold War ideology that divided Europe into the "First [Western] World" and the "Second [Eastern] World," fascism in Central and Eastern Europe was distinguished from its "Western" counterpart and often exoticized as a "mutant" form of fascism. In so doing, scholars worked with *rigid* and *totalizing* definitions of historical regions inherited from the normative symbolic geographies first advanced by Enlightenment thinkers and reinforced, in a new key, by ideological divisions during the Cold War. On the one hand, they promoted the image of a unified and homogenous West, thus being "guilty" of Occidentalism, an attitude informed by "typified" or "stylized images of the West."⁴⁷ On the other hand, at a time when Central Europe disappeared from the mental map and political vocabulary of Europe as it was forcefully incorporated into the larger Soviet camp,⁴⁸ they deployed the over-generalized, monolithic Cold War notion of "Eastern European fascism" to lump together what we now know were diverse fascist movements in Hungary, Slovakia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria or the Baltic states, thus running the danger of "essentializing" or "Orientalizing" these phenomena.⁴⁹

⁴³ Bela Vago, "Fascism in Eastern Europe," in Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, 229–253.

⁴⁴ Stanley Payne, especially the section "The Question of Balkan Fascism," in "The NDH: An Introduction," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 414–415.

⁴⁵ Charles F. Delzel, ed., *Mediterranean Fascism 1919–1945* (New York: Walker, 1970).

⁴⁶ Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism* (Boston: South End Press, 1979).

⁴⁷ James G. Carrier, ed., *Occidentalism: Images of the West* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

⁴⁸ For an overview of the history of the concept of Central Europe and the various ideologically driven visions of the political organization of this region, see Constantin Iordachi, "The Quest for Central Europe: Symbolic Geographies and Historical Regions," in *Regional and International Relations of Central Europe*, eds. Zlatko Sabic and Petr Drulák (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 40–61.

⁴⁹ On the concept of Orientalism, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979); on the invention of "Eastern Europe," see Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994).

In addition, this scholarly outlook was shaped by modernization theories prevalent at the time in Western historiography. These theories treated institutional creativity as a monopoly of Western Europe and degraded the status of the "Second" and "Third" worlds to mere imitations of the Western European model, devoid of their own ideological or institutional creativity. Since fascism was regarded as a symptom of development in highly advanced Western European capitalist countries,⁵⁰ as a crisis or malaise of modernity, fascist movements and regimes outside Western Europe were treated as "false fascisms," or at best as pre-political charismatic movements in developing countries. For example, for Ernst Nolte, a scholar who regarded fascism as a post-1918 European reaction to the strain of modernity and industrialism against a societal background marked by cultural relativism, the development of radical mass movements in countries like Romania posed an intriguing research question: "How could a certain kind of subtle cultural critique have become a vital political factor in Romania, *at the edge of Europe*?"⁵¹ His own inconclusive answer was that "*it is not fascism itself*, but the clear development of certain essential characteristics, which is dependent on the size of the country and the significance of its spiritual traditions."⁵² It is symptomatic of the approach I describe that Nolte symbolically places Romania at the "edge of Europe" rather than in the southeastern part of the continent's center, where it is geographically located, and that he denies the genuine nature of fascism in that country and more generally in that region.

Finally, many of the works on fascism published in the 1960s and 1970s were characterized by a certain method of historical comparison, heavily influenced by quantification and behaviorism. Their research agenda focused mostly on social history, based on the idea that classes existed objectively and could be studied quantitatively. Overall, these research stances produced some outstanding results but also posed numerous conceptual and methodological problems, by introducing

⁵⁰ On the theory of modernization, see Reinhard Bendix, "Tradition and Modernity Reconsidered," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9, no. 4 (1967), 292–346; Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Henry Ashby Turner, Jr., "Fascism and Modernization," *World Politics* 24 (July 1972), 547–564; and A.F.K. Organski, "Fascism and Modernization," in *The Nature of Fascism*, ed. Woolf, 19–41.

⁵¹ Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 462, emphasis added.

⁵² *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

geographic divisions in the definition of generic fascism.⁵³ Once these regional labels were established as distinct “regional forms of fascisms,” integrating these sub-types into mainstream theories became very difficult, subverting the idea of generic fascism by breaking it down into hierarchically organized imitative forms of regional fascisms.

I.2. *Fascism on the Fringes? Studies of Fascism in the Balkans*

In the historiographical context described above, the history of fascist movements in Southeastern Europe has posed many challenges to comparative fascist studies. The emergence of fascism in the Balkans, on the one hand, as well as its failure to develop into leading political movements, on the other, have equally puzzled students of fascism. As noted above, some historians were bewildered by the fact that fascism—in their view, a malaise of advanced capitalism—could develop in predominantly agrarian countries.⁵⁴ Others commented, on the contrary, that the numerous radical nationalists in the region had failed to develop into full-fledged fascist mass movements.⁵⁵

To date, beyond such general assessments, comparative treatments of fascism in the Balkans have been rather scarce. Research on the topic has concentrated mostly on “national” case studies, especially on Romania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, while Greece and Albania have remained almost virtual blank spots in fascist studies. Moreover, unlike in Western Europe, where scholarship on fascism managed to liberate itself from the Marxist dogma on the topic, in the Soviet bloc, fascism was approached almost exclusively from the perspective of the rigid Stalinist dogma. It was treated either as an artificial, imported phenomenon or as a manifestation of the dictatorship of big capital. The excessive politicization and control of history-writing in these countries left little room for genuine theoretical and methodological debates on fascism, potentially leading to novel innovative perspectives. Although in certain political contexts deviation from the official interpretation of history was tolerated, at least implicitly, generally that could occur only with heavy personal costs or unavoidable interpretative concessions.

⁵³ See, for example, the following collective volumes: Woolf, ed., *The Nature of Fascism*; and Larson, Hagtvet and Myklebust, eds., *Who Were the Fascists?*

⁵⁴ On the first point, see Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, 462, quoted above.

⁵⁵ See Payne, *Fascism: A History*, 414–415, also discussed below, in the conclusion.

Naturally, the evolution of studies on fascism in communist Southeastern Europe was far from monolithic. Beyond the common features generated by the imposition of the Orthodox Marxist dogma, one can identify significant country-specific differences. Generally, in countries with strong pre-communist traditions of Marxist research in social sciences, where Stalinist political purges in academia remained incomplete, or where political control over scholarly research was relatively relaxed after the process of de-Stalinization, historians could engage, to various degrees, in the revision of the Marxist interpretation of fascism. Other factors of differentiation were the size and importance of interwar fascist movements in each country and their relation to national ideology; the extent of fascist collaboration in the Holocaust; the symbolic place occupied by the interwar or wartime periods in the master-narrative of national history; the nature of the communist takeover; and the relation between history, politics and nation-building.

These differences notwithstanding, fascism remained, by and large, a marginalized topic of non-systematic research in communist historiography in the region. The state of the field resembled a mosaic of disparate national case studies approached in relative isolation from each other. True, the adoption of a unified Stalinist dogma on fascism in all countries in the region encouraged, to a certain extent, comparative perspectives at regional or pan-European levels.⁵⁶ But these comparative insights were generally limited to the structural conditions for the emergence of fascism allegedly provided by the dominant capitalist system and to the repressive nature of fascist regimes, targeting mostly the working class. Less attention was devoted to the issue of comparisons and entanglements among fascist movements and regimes in the Balkans or the wider Eastern European space. It was only in the post-communist period that historians started to openly question historiographical taboos and to experiment with new transnational methods for the study of this complex and controversial political phenomenon, with a focus on cultural-ideological aspects. In what follows, I provide overviews of the existing scholarship on fascism in Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece, with

⁵⁶ For Marxist comparative works on fascism in Eastern Europe, see, among others, Franciszek Ryszka, *Le Fascisme européen diversité et communauté (les perspectives des recherches comparatives)* (Warsaw: Państwowe wydawnictwo naukowe, 1977), in Poland; Mária Ormos and Miklós Incze, *Europai fasizmusok: 1919–1939* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1976) and Mária Ormos, *Faschismus und Krise: über einige theoretische Fragen der europäischen faschistischen Erscheinungen* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980), in Hungary.

an emphasis on continuities and ruptures between communist and post-communist historiographic trends. In order to integrate local trends into a larger historiographical picture, I also highlight points of contact and convergence with Western works on fascism in the Balkans. This historiographical survey, corroborated with the comprehensive comparison between the Legion and the Ustaša conducted in the second part of the paper, will enable me to advance in the conclusion a set of guidelines for building a new transnational comparative framework for studying fascism in the Balkans.

1.2.1. *Romania*

In view of the Legion of the Archangel Michael's spectacular political trajectory, the political prestige it accumulated in the 1930s and its deep political impact, fascism in Romania has received more attention in local and Western scholarship than other case studies in the region.⁵⁷ Generally, the Legion has been defined as one of the most atypical interwar fascist movements. The movement is often singled out within the general typology of fascism as "a distinct sub-type,"⁵⁸ in view of its religiously charged language, visual symbolism and ritual practice, as well as the massive participation of clerics in the movement. The first major work on the Iron Guard was authored in 1944 by the Marxist intellectual and activist Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu. Echoing Gramsci's cultural approach to fascism, Pătrășcanu emphasized the important role played by symbolic politics, rites and rituals in the Legion's mass appeal and electoral success. Pătrășcanu also pointed out that, while German National Socialists and Italian Fascists "kept a certain distance from the dominant religions and churches," the Legion "inserted the Orthodox Christian religion into its political agitation," in both "form" and "substance."⁵⁹ In his view, this syncretism was in fact a counterfeit appropriation of main tenets of the Eastern Orthodox dogma by the Legion, enabling a charlatanic exploitation

⁵⁷ For pioneering works, see: Weber, *Varieties of Fascism*; Eugen Weber, "Romania," in *The European Right*, eds. Rogger and Weber, 501–574; F.L. Carsten, *The Rise of Fascism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967); Zeev Barbu, "Rumania," in *European Fascism*, ed. Woolf, 146–166; Zeev Barbu, "Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard, the Fascist Movement of Romania," in *Who Were the Fascists?* eds. Larsen, Hagtvet and Myklebust, 379–394; Stephen Fischer-Galați, "Fascism in Romania," in *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, ed. Sugar, 112–121; Emanuel Turczynski, "The Background of Romanian Fascism," in *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, ed. Sugar, 101–111.

⁵⁸ Payne, "The NDH: An Introduction," 411–412.

⁵⁹ Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, *Sub trei dictaturi* (Bucharest: Forum, 1944), 42, 44.

of the religious mysticism of the peasantry based on a quasi-religious doctrine. This line of reasoning was continued by historian Radu Ioanid, who—in another comprehensive analysis of the Legionary ideology—claimed that the Legion was “one of the rare modern European political movements with a religious structure.”⁶⁰

In the 1960s and 1970s, following the dominant theories of modernization, pioneering scholars of Romanian fascism defined the Legion as a sort of pre-modern and pre-political millennial movement, a curious revival—even if in seemingly modern garments—of similar phenomena that took place in early modern Europe, reflecting Central Europe’s economic and political backwardness. In a series of pioneering studies, Eugen Weber provided a preliminary sociological overview of the organizational and membership structure of the Legion. Arguing that Codreanu’s doctrine and nationalism “were of a completely different essence than that which we discover in other social movements of our time,” Weber compared them to Christian chiliastic movements “the West had known in the 14th and 16th century but forgotten since,”⁶¹ which thus made them “closer to cargo cults than they are to fascism.”⁶² Zeev Barbu added a physiological dimension to the study of the Legion, arguing that “the *legionari* constituted a psychological rather than a political group,” a form of “messianic salvationist movement.” Like Weber, Barbu adopted a “modernizing” perspective, asserting that the Legion illustrates “the transition from a religious to a political movement in a developing country.”⁶³

Another alternative thesis on the nature of the Iron Guard was that of populism. For Peter Wiles, the Iron Guard “was in essence a populist movement.”⁶⁴ Renzo de Felice arrives at similar conclusions,⁶⁵ also

⁶⁰ Radu Ioanid, “The Sacralized Politics of the Romanian Iron Guard,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (2003), 419. See also Radu Ioanid, *The Sword of the Archangel: Fascist Ideology in Romania* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1990), published in Romanian as *Sabia Arhanghelului Mihail. Ideologia fascistă în România* (Bucharest: Diogene, 1995).

⁶¹ Weber, *Varieties of Fascism*, 96.

⁶² Weber, “Romania,” in *The European Right*, eds. Rogger and Weber, 523–524.

⁶³ Barbu, “Rumania,” in *European Fascism*, ed. Woolf, 156, 160; Barbu, “Psycho-Historical and Sociological Perspectives on the Iron Guard,” in *Who Were the Fascists? Social Roots of European Fascism*, eds. Larsen, Hagtvet and Myklebust, 393.

⁶⁴ Peter Wiles, “A Syndrome, not a Doctrine: Some Elementary Theses on Populism,” in *Populism: Its Meanings and National Characteristics*, eds. Ghiță Ionescu and Ernest Gellner (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969), 176.

⁶⁵ Renzo de Felice, *Intervista sul fascismo*, ed. Michael A. Ledeen (Rome: Laterza, 1999, 2nd ed.), 83.

adopted by his disciple Ambri⁶⁶ and further defended, in the context of Romanian studies, by Kurt W. Treptow.⁶⁷

In the 1980s and 1990s, historians of comparative fascism acknowledged the Legion's fascist features but still hesitated to fully locate it within mainstream European fascism. Stanley G. Payne pointed out that the Legion "is generally classified as fascist because it met the main criteria of any appropriate fascist typology, but it presented undeniably individual characteristics of its own."⁶⁸ Payne defined the Legion as "a mystical kenotic form of *semi-religious fascism*" and "the only notable movement of this kind in an Orthodox country."⁶⁹ Similarly, pointing out its "overtly and sincerely religious" character, Roger Eatwell defined the Legion as a form of "clerical fascism" typically developed "in highly peasant-based societies, where outside the radical Left there was little scope for parties which were not overtly religious."⁷⁰ Eatwell concluded that "there are problems in unequivocally including the Iron Guard within a radical generic fascist pantheon."⁷¹ More recently, two prominent scholars of fascism, Emilio Gentile and Roger Griffin, approached the religious component of the Legion from the perspective of the process of sacralizing politics.⁷²

A major breakthrough in the study of the Iron Guard was Armin Heinen's massive 1986 monograph titled *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien*. This groundbreaking volume provided a much-needed, systematic history of the movement, covering its ideological origins, its organizational roots, its political evolution and, equally important, its advent to power and demise in 1940–1941. Based on a solid empirical foundation, Heinen was able to refute the thesis defining the Legion of the Archangel Michael as a populist movement. Anchoring the scholarly discussion in the contemporary German—yet not Anglo-Saxon—literature on fascism, Heinen was instead able to establish convincingly the Legion's genuinely

⁶⁶ Marino Ambri, *I falsi fascismi: Ungheria, Jugoslavia, Romania: 1919–1945*, with an introductory essay by Renzo de Felice (Rome: Jouvence, 1980).

⁶⁷ Kurt W. Treptow, "Populism in Twentieth-Century Romanian Politics," in *Populism in Eastern Europe*, ed. Joseph Held (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 197–218.

⁶⁸ Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, 280.

⁶⁹ Payne, *Fascism: Comparison and Definition*, 198–199.

⁷⁰ Roger Eatwell, "Reflections on Fascism and Religion," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4, no. 3 (2003), 154.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Gentile, "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion," 361–362; Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism*, 356.

fascist nature.⁷³ Another important contribution was made by Francisco Veiga: coming from the tradition of Spanish studies of fascism, Veiga provided an unconventional interpretation of the Legion's ideology and social profile, defining it as "a political chameleon, able to paint itself in the colors of the background on which it activated."⁷⁴

For many decades, research in Romania shunned these international developments. As in other Soviet satellite states, the communist regime in Romania based its claims of political legitimacy on its anti-fascist struggle. The official communist interpretation of history rested on the key thesis that General Ion Antonescu's wartime regime (1940–1944) was a fascist dictatorship. The August 23, 1944, coup d'état that ousted Antonescu from power and made possible Romania's military insurrection against Nazi Germany was presented in communist historiography as a major turning point in history, inaugurating a new era of revolutionary transformations leading to the establishment of the communist regime. The role of the Romanian Communist Party in the overthrow of Antonescu's "fascist regime" was exaggerated in order to prove the revolutionary nature of the Party and its adherence to national values and thus to obscure the paramount role played by the Soviet Red Army in the communist takeover. The 1944 "anti-fascist armed insurrection" therefore became the central axis of the communist interpretation of recent history and the main source of legitimacy; in 1948 it was officially proclaimed the country's national holiday. To substantiate this interpretation of history, early communist historiography blurred the distinction between the nature of the Legion and that of Antonescu's wartime regime, portraying them both as fascist.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, Romanian historiography partially liberated itself from the dogmatic constraints of the Stalinist interpretation of the Antonescu regime⁷⁵ but instead developed a highly problematic revisionist approach to the topic. In the context of Nicolae Ceaușescu's ideological

⁷³ Armin Heinen, *Die Legion "Erzengel Michael" in Rumänien: soziale Bewegung und politische Organisation. Ein Beitrag zum Problem des internationalen Faschismus* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1986), published in Romanian as *Legiunea "Arhanghelul Mihail." Mișcare socială și organizație politică. O contribuție la problema fascismului internațional* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998).

⁷⁴ Francisco Veiga, *La Mística del Ultranacionalismo. Historia de la Guardia de Hieron. Rumania, 1919–1941* (Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 1989), published in Romanian as *Istoria Gărzii de Fier, 1919–1941. Mistica ultranaționalismului* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993; 2nd ed., 1995), 10.

⁷⁵ Aurică Simion, *Regimul politic din România în perioada septembrie 1940–ianuarie 1941* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1976); Aurică Simion, *Preliminarii politico-diplomatice ale insurecției române din august 1944* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1978).

conflict with János Kádár's reformist agenda in Hungary and Gorbachev's USSR, General Antonescu was gradually rehabilitated as a patriot, a savior who rescued the country from the fascist terror and a fighter for Romania's territorial integrity against Stalinist Russia and Horthy's Hungary. To be sure, communist historiography continued to blame Antonescu for his collaboration with Nazi Germany and for his responsibility in Romania's military disaster on the Eastern Front. Yet it downplayed Antonescu's initial collaboration with the Legion of Archangel Michael, emphasizing instead the irreconcilable differences between the two parties, which led to the Legion's rebellion and its forceful removal from power by the army in January 1941. Communist historiography also tried to obscure Antonescu's anti-Semitism, highlighting instead his actions intended to institute a regime of "law and order" against the Legion's unruly anarchy and terrorism, and even to rescue Jews toward the end of the war.

This changing perspective on the Antonescu regime did not, however, stimulate research on fascism proper. At a time when Western and Eastern scholars were experimenting with alternative Marxist interpretations of fascism, Romanian historians still employed Stalin's interpretation of fascism as a political instrument of big capital and a fifth column of revisionist powers. Official communist historiography argued that the Legion had neither an ideology of its own nor vitality and mass support, and that it was nothing more than a terrorist organization subsidized by Nazi Germany.⁷⁶

The trend of Antonescu's rehabilitation continued for a while in Romanian historiography after 1989 as well. In the ideological confrontation between democracy and authoritarianism that marked the process of democratic consolidation in post-communist Romania, Antonescu was presented as a martyr for the national cause and, in a major departure from the communist interpretation, a victim of communist repression.⁷⁷ However, unlike the late communist-era historiography, which emphasized the differences between Antonescu's regime and the Iron Guard, postcommunist revisionist historiography has also attempted to rehabilitate the latter, downplaying the conflict between Antonescu and the

⁷⁶ Mihai Fătu and Ion Spălățelu, *Garda de Fier: Organizație teroristă de tip fascist* (Bucharest: Editura Politică, 1971).

⁷⁷ Gheorghe Buzatu et al., ed., *Mareșalul Antonescu în fața istoriei*, 2 vols. (Iași: BAI, 1990); Larry L. Watts, *Romanian Cassandra: Ion Antonescu and the Struggle for Reform, 1916–1941* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1993); Kurt W. Treptow and Gheorghe Buzatu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în fața istoriei* (Iași, 1994); Dorel Bancoș, *Social și național în politica guvernului Ion Antonescu* (Bucharest: Eminescu, 2000); and Ioan Dan, *Procesul Mareșalului Antonescu* (Bucharest: Lucman, 2005).

Legion and pointing instead to their patriotism, idealism and sacrifice for the national cause.⁷⁸

In response to this revisionist trend, a new wave of critical scholarship has deconstructed the “Antonescu myth” and its political instrumentalization.⁷⁹ These scholars also focused on the rise of anti-Semitism to the level of systematic state policy during Antonescu’s rule, his responsibility in the partial extermination of Romanian Jews during World War II, and the repressive nature of Antonescu’s regime. This led to a wider debate over Romania’s participation to the Holocaust. By and large, scholars involved in this debate took one of three main stances: negationist historical revisionism, denying that Antonescu’s Romania participated in the Holocaust; functionalist, regarding external factors, especially foreign policy considerations, as having the main role in the partial extermination of Romanian Jews; and intentionalist, underscoring the importance of the internal factors in the extermination of Jews, particularly the spread of anti-Semitism.⁸⁰ The debate culminated with the publication of the Final Report of the International Presidential Commission for the Study of the

⁷⁸ For attempts to rehabilitate Codreanu and the Iron Guard, see mainly Buzatu et al., eds., *Mareșalul Antonescu în fața istoriei*; and Treptow and Buzatu, *Corneliu Zelea Codreanu în fața istoriei*.

⁷⁹ Eduard Mezincescu, *Mareșalul Antonescu și catastrofa României* (Bucharest: Artemis, 1993); Paul Michelson, “In Search of the 20th Century: Marshal Ion Antonescu and Romanian History: A Review Essay,” *Romanian Civilization* 3, no. 2 (1994), 73–103; Randolph L. Braham, *Romanian Nationalists and the Holocaust: The Political Exploitation of Unfounded Rescue Accounts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Michael Shafir, *Între negare și trivializare. Negarea Holocaustului în țările postcomuniste din Europa central și de Est* (Iași: Polirom, 2000); Michael Shafir, “Marshal Antonescu’s Postcommunist Rehabilitation. Cui bono?” in Randolph L. Braham, ed., *The Destruction of Romanian and Ukrainian Jews during the Antonescu Era* (Boulder, CO: The Rosenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies Graduate Center/City University of New York and Social Science Monographs, 1997), 349–410; Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), published in Romanian as *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997); Dennis Deletant, *Hitler’s Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania, 1940–44* (Hampshire, UK, and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁸⁰ For a comprehensive overview of this literature, see Constantin Iordachi, “Problema Holocaustului în România și Transnistria - Dezbateri istoriografice,” in *România și Transnistria: Problema Holocaustului. Perspective istorice și comparative*, eds. Viorel Achim and Constantin Iordachi (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2004), 23–77. For works on the Holocaust in Romania see, among others, I.C. Butnaru, *The Silent Holocaust: Romania and its Jews*, with a preface by Elie Wiesel (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), published in Romanian as *Holocaustul uitat: considerațiuni istorice, politice și sociale cu privire la antisemitismul românesc* (Tel Aviv: I.C. Butnaru, 1985); Radu Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania: The Destruction of Jews and Gypsies under the Antonescu Regime, 1940–1944* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000); Carol Iancu, *Shoah în timpul regimului Antonescu (1940–1944)* (Iași: Polirom 2001); Lya Benjamin, *Prigoană și rezistență în istoria evreilor din România, 1940–1944* (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001); Jean Ancel, *Contribuții la istoria României. Problema evreiască, 1933–1944*, 3 vols. (Bucharest: Hasefer, 2001).

Holocaust in Romania, led by Elie Wiesel, which concluded that the campaign of deportation and extermination of Jews conducted by Antonescu's government was an integral part of the Holocaust during World War II.⁸¹ The publication of the official report of the commission, and the adoption of legislation against Holocaust denial by the Romanian Parliament, have effectively eliminated overt negationist claims from public and official discourse, setting the debate on new foundations.

This research interest in anti-Semitism has been gradually extended to the history of the Legion as well. A plethora of works have added significantly to our knowledge of a number of important topics, such as fascism and the process of nation- and state-building, fascism and generational messianism, fascist propaganda and style of politics, or fascism and the evolution of the political system in Greater Romania.⁸² The bulk of this research effort has focused on the close connection between fascism and contemporary debates on national ideology, and on the identity dilemmas and political trajectories of a number of prominent interwar intellectuals who collaborated, to various degrees, with the Legion.⁸³ This feature

⁸¹ Tuvia Friling, Radu Ioanid and Mihai E. Ionescu, eds., *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania* (Elie Wiesel, president of the commission) (Iași: Polirom, 2005).

⁸² For education and the process of nation- and state-building in Romania, see Irina Livezeanu, *Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1995). On Codreanu's charismatic type of authority and organization of power, see Constantin Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence: The Legion of Archangel Michael in Interwar Romania* (Trondheim: Trondheim Studies on East European Cultures and Societies, 2004). On Legionary work camps, see Valentin Săndulescu, "Taming the Body': Preliminary Considerations regarding the Legionary Work Camps System (1933–1937)," *Historical Yearbook* 5 (2008), 85–94; and Rebecca Haynes, "Work Camps, Commerce, and the Education of the 'New Man' in the Romanian Legionary Movement," *Historical Journal* 51, no. 4 (2008), 943–967. On the fascist sacralization of politics, see Valentin Săndulescu, "Sacralised Politics in Action: The February 1937 Burial of the Romanian Legionary Leaders Ion Moța and Vasile Marin," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 8, no. 2 (2007), 259–269. On the links between the Legion's sacralization of politics and the nineteenth-century traditions of palingenetic nationalism, see Constantin Iordachi, "God's Chosen Warriors: Romantic Palingenesis, Militarism and Fascism in Modern Romania," in *Comparative Fascist Studies*, ed. Iordachi, 316–357. On aristocrats in the Legion, see Constantin Iordachi, "Aristocracy, Fascism and the Social Origins of Mass Politics in Inter-war Romania," in *Noble Fascists? European Aristocracies and the Radical Right*, ed. Karina Urbach (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 201–232.

⁸³ Alexandru Florian and Constantin Petculescu, *Ideea care ucide: dimensiunile ideologiei legionare* (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1994); Constantin Petculescu, *Mișcarea legionară: mit și realitate* (Bucharest: Noua Alternativă, 1997); Dragoș Zamfirescu, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail." De la mit la realitate* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997); Ioan Constantinescu, *Despre exegeza extremei drepte românești. Însemnări polemice* (Iași: Junimea, 1999).

accounts for the cultural “prestige” enjoyed by the Legion in fascist circles at home and abroad, unmatched by the other mass fascist movements in Central Europe, such as the Ustaša or the Arrow Cross. The topic has been amply discussed by scholarship on Romania in the last two decades, amid heated debates on the intricate relationship between the intelligentsia and the radical nationalist ideology of the interwar period. Most works concentrated mainly on the Legion’s relation to a handful of leading intellectuals, most notably Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Constantin Noica.⁸⁴ Following a couple of denunciatory articles on these famous intellectuals’ association with the Legion, a huge international debate ensued around their political past,⁸⁵ also fueled by their “silence” concerning their pre-1945 political affiliations. After these cultural figures passed away, the debate lost its immediate relevance in personal terms but gained a broader cultural-historical resonance, as part of the larger European debate over the involvement of prominent intellectuals in various totalitarian systems and ideologies. Unfortunately, these works almost completely lacked references to contemporary debates on fascism. Only recently has a new generation of historians placed fascism in Romania in

⁸⁴ For the relation between the intellectuals of the “young generation” and the Iron Guard, see Leon Volovici, *Nationalist Ideology and Anti-Semitism: The Case of Romanian Intellectuals in the 1930s* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1991); Zigu Ornea, *Anii treizeci: extrema dreaptă românească* (Bucharest: Editura Fundației Culturale Române, 1995), published in English as *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999). On interpersonal relations among the young intellectuals, see Norman Manea, “Felix Culpa,” in *On Clowns: The Dictator and the Artist* (New York: Grove Press, 1992); Matei Călinescu, “Ionesco and Rhinoceros: Personal and Political Backgrounds,” *East European Politics and Societies* 9, no. 3 (1995), 393–434; Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Cioran, Eliade, Ionescu: L’oubli du fascisme. Trois intellectuels roumains dans la tourmente du siècle* (Paris: PUF, 2003). On Cioran, see Sorin Antohi, “Cioran și stigmatul românesc. Mecanisme identitare și definiții radicale ale etnicității,” in *Civitas Imaginalis. Istorie și utopie în cultura română* (Bucharest: Litera, 1994), 234–236, 283–284; and Marta Petreu, *Un trecut deocheat sau “Schimbarea la față a României”* (Cluj: Biblioteca Apostrof, 1999) published in English as *Marta Petreu, An Infamous Past: E.M. Cioran and the Rise of Fascism in Romania* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005). On Mircea Eliade, see mainly MacLinscott Ricketts, *Mircea Eliade: The Romanian Roots, 1907–1945* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, Ithaca, NY, 1988); Daniel Dubuisson, *Mythologies du XX^e siècle: Dumézil, Lévi-Strauss, Eliade* (Lille, France: Presses universitaires de Lille, 1993); and Florin Țurcanu, *Mircea Eliade. Le prisonnier de l’histoire*, with a preface by Jacques Julliard (Paris: La Découverte, 2004). On Noica, see Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine, *Filozofie și nationalism: Paradoxul Noica* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998); and Sorin Lavric, *Noica și Mișcarea Legionară* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2007).

⁸⁵ For a more ample presentation of these debates, see Constantin Iordachi and Balázs Trencsényi, “In Search of a Usable Past: The Question of National Identity in Romanian Studies, 1990–2000,” *East European Politics and Societies* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2003), 415–453.

a European context and explored new topics of research connected with mass politics.⁸⁶

1.2.2. *Yugoslavia*

The history of interwar Yugoslavia illustrates the challenges faced by scholars studying fascism in the Balkans. First, there existed a plethora of right-wing movements that can be discussed in the larger context of fascist studies, such as Orjuna (1921–1929), the Ustaša (1929–1945), the Yugoslav Radical Union (1935–1941) led by Milan Stojadinović, and Zbor (1935–1945), led by Dimitrije Ljotić.⁸⁷ Second, these movements advocated rival pan-Yugoslav, Greater Croatian, or Greater Serbian national projects, respectively; their study thus provides an interesting case of antagonistic far right-wing entanglements. Third, among these movements, only the Ustaša acquired clear fascist characteristics; the others provide particular examples of right-wing movements with proto- or para-fascism traits. Fourth, the historiographical perspectives advanced on these movements have been bewilderingly diverse, thus further adding to the difficulties of arriving at a consensus in the academic literature over their nature.

The first radical organization in interwar Yugoslavia that attracted significant research attention was Orjuna, a movement advocating a platform of Yugoslav integral nationalism. Orjuna was active mostly in the contested, multiethnic border regions of Dalmatia, Vojvodina and Slovenia, where it engaged in paramilitary violence against national minorities, communists and separatist movements. In communist Yugoslavia, a number of contributions written in a Marxist vein focused on Orjuna's history, style and organization.⁸⁸ After the dissolution of communist Yugoslavia,

⁸⁶ For the first call to integrate the Iron Guard more firmly in fascist studies and a link with the recent Anglo-Saxon scholarship on fascism, see Iordachi, *Charisma, Politics and Violence*. For a general introduction to fascism studies for the Romanian public, see Mihai Chioveanu, *Fețele fascismului. Politica, ideologie și scrisul istoric în secolul 20* (Bucharest: Editura Universității din București, 2005).

⁸⁷ Veljko Rašević, *Ogled o shvatanjima Dimitrija Ljotića* (Paris: Izd. Naše Reči, 2004); Ratko Parežanin, *Drugi svetski rat i Dimitrije Ljotić* (Munich: Iskra, 1971); and Jozo Tomasevich, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia, 1941–1945: Occupation and Collaboration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

⁸⁸ Branislav Gligorićević, "Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (Orjuna)," *Istorija XX veka: zbornik radova* 5 (1963), 315–393; Hrvoje Matković, *Svetozar Pribićević i Samostalna demokratska stranka do šestojanuarske diktature* (Zagreb: Institut za hrvatsku povijest Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1972); Branislav Gligorićević, "Profašistička organizacija Orjuna i revolucionarni radnički pokret Jugoslavije," in *Revolucionarno delavsko gibanje v Sloveniji v letih 1921–1924: referati z znanstvenega posvetovanja v Ljubljani 6. in 7. junija 1974*, ed. Tone

the history of Orjuna and its relation to the various rival nationalist projects in interwar Yugoslavia was scrutinized by the Serbian,⁸⁹ Croatian⁹⁰ and Slovenian⁹¹ historiographies, arriving at different evaluations of its ideology and political goals. The overall perception was that in the early 1920s Orjuna manifested itself as a potential laboratory for creating a strong grassroots fascist movement, but that in time it gravitated toward the non-fascist radical Right. This political evolution was indicated by Orjuna's monarchism, its lack of adequate charismatic leadership, the lack of mass appeal of its Yugoslavist national project in face of strong secessionist movements by rival nationalisms, and the lack of political room for maneuvering under the post-1929 dictatorial regime of King Alexander (1929–1934), when many elements of Orjuna's integral Yugoslavist agenda became official state ideology.

Much of the research on fascism in Yugoslavia concentrated on the Ustaša movement in Croatia. The movement attracted attention in view of its wild radicalism, its vast international ramifications, its high-profile terrorist activities and the fact that, despite all its wartime constraints and external limitations, the Ustaša regime lasted for over four years (April 10, 1941–May 8, 1945), thus allowing it to engage in totalitarian experiments in certain policy fields, with a long-lasting impact on Croat and Yugoslav society. In the first postwar decades, however, Western scholarship on fascism largely ignored the history of the Ustaša.⁹² This omission—which was even more anomalous if one also considers the post-1945 activities of the former Ustaša leaders in exile, many of whom engaged in terrorist acts worldwide against Tito's communist regime—was mostly due to the fact

Ferenc (Ljubljana: 1975), 122–134; and Jelka Melik, "Orjunaši na sodišču," *Kronika: Review for Slovenian Local History* 37, no. 3 (1989), 247–253.

⁸⁹ Mladen Đorđević, "Organizacija jugoslovenskih nacionalista (Orjuna)—istorija, ideologija, uticaji," *Nova srpska politička misao* 12, nos. 1–4 (2005), 187–219.

⁹⁰ Ivan J. Bošković, *Orjuna—Ideologija i književnost* (Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 2006); "Splitski orjunaški list Pobjeda i Stjepan Radić," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 39, no. 1 (2007), 117–132.

⁹¹ Darko Friš, "Mariborski odbor Orjune in dogodki leta 1923," *Melikov zbornik* (Ljubljana) (2000), 933–950; Darko Friš, "Aktivnosti mestnega odbora Orjune v Mariboru v prvem letu delovanja," *Studia Historica Slovenica* 4, nos. 2–3 (2004), 507–527; Jurij Perovšek, "Nacionalnopolitički koncepti slovenskih unitarističnih sil leta 1923," *Zgodovinski časopis* 45, no. 2 (1991), 65–83; Jurij Perovšek, "Orjuna, u: skupina autora, Slovenska kronika XX. stoletja, knj.1: 1900–1941," *Ljubljana: Nova revija* (1995–1996), 279–280.

⁹² For early overviews, see Dimitrije Djordjević, "Fascism in Yugoslavia: 1918–1945," and Ivan Avakumović, "Yugoslavia's Fascist Movements," both in *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918–1945*, ed. Sugar, 125–134 and 135–145.

that, until recently, Western scholars denied the fascist character of the Ustaša. This verdict was influenced, at least in part, by the marginalization of the Ustaša within international interwar fascist organizations; the movement did not collaborate within the Italian CAUR and was not represented at general discussions concerning the creation of a Fascist International. In academic terms, the prevailing view of the nature of the Ustaša movement was shaped by a pioneering book published in 1964, in German, by Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat*.⁹³ While very informative, this book classified the Ustaša as a semi-fascist rather than a fully fascist organization. Since for a long time this was the only major work available in a major world language, its verdict was echoed by many Western researchers.⁹⁴ The Ustaša's exclusion from the panoply of interwar fascist movements explains the lack of references to the history of the movement in general textbooks on fascism.

In communist Yugoslavia, important research on the Ustaša has been published mostly since the late 1960s. With few exceptions, the first official interpretations of the Ustaša did not go beyond Marxist stereotypes. The Ustaša was portrayed as a clear case of an imported fascist movement without a social base in Croatia itself, but made up of terrorist cells active in Italy, Germany or Hungary, torn by conflicting influences and lacking an ideology of its own. The Independent State of Croatia (in Croatian: *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, hereinafter NDH) was regarded as no more than a puppet state under dual, German and Italian, foreign patronage. Only gradually did a more nuanced Marxist interpretation emerge, supported by new documentary evidence provided by the publication of primary sources on the Ustaša located in local or foreign archives.⁹⁵ This led, according to Nada Kisić Kolanović, to a polarization of research on the

⁹³ Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, *Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat: 1941–1945* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1964).

⁹⁴ Stanley Payne argued that the Ustaša was originally a proto-fascist movement that developed toward full-fledged fascism only in 1936–1937. See *A History of Fascism: 1914–1945*, 326. In turn, Roger Griffin argued that, while extremely violent, the Ustaša actually lacked a palingenetic vision of mass mobilization for the post-destructive phase, thus remaining a proto-fascist organization for its entire history: see *The Nature of Fascism*, 120. A similar verdict was reached by J. James Sadkovich, *Italian Support for Croatian Separatism, 1927–1937* (New York and London: Garland, 1987).

⁹⁵ See Ferdo Čulinović, *Okupatorska podjela Jugoslavije* (Belgrade: Vojnoizdavački zavod, 1970); Matija Kovačić, *Od Radića do Pavelića, Hrvatska u borbi za svoju samostalnost, uspomene jednog novinara* (Munich and Barcelona, 1970); Mladen Čolić, *Takozvana Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Belgrade: Delta Press, 1971); Ivan Jelić, *Hrvatska u ratu i revoluciji, 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1978); Ljubo Boban, *Hrvatska u arhivima izbjegličke vlade*

Ustaša between two discourses, critical Marxist vs. “nostalgic-apologetic.”⁹⁶ The critical Marxist interpretation of fascism was mainly promoted by leading scholars such as Fikreta Jelić-Butić and Bogdan Krizman, who contributed major syntheses on the Ustaša’s history.⁹⁷ Their works widened the documentary basis of scholarly investigation but, I would argue, fell short of fully overcoming the ideological limitations of the Marxist approach to fascism. Kisić Kolanović also points out that, in contrast to the anti-fascist Marxist discourse, a “nostalgic-apologetic” approach to the history of the Ustaša gradually emerged.⁹⁸ Promoted mostly abroad by émigré intellectuals and activists such as Vinko Nikolić and Antun Bonifačić, the editors of the journal *Hrvatska revija* (Croatian Review) (published abroad from 1951 in Buenos Aires and then in Paris, Munich and Barcelona, before moving back to Zagreb in 1991), this trend tended to downplay the racial/genocidal policies of the Ustaša regime, emphasizing instead its contribution to the process of nation- and state-building in Croatia.

After the breakup of Yugoslavia, research interest in the history of the Ustaša movement has surged, in the context of the dissolution of Yugoslav historiography and the creation of distinct, non-Marxist national narratives in the successor states. Research on the Ustaša has been an integral part of the process of writing national history in Serbia and Croatia, in particular, since in both countries the topic is closely linked with the issue of victimhood and retroactive justice. In Serbia, research on the Ustaša was generally meant to demonstrate the traditional anti-Serbian character of Croatian nationalism and the campaign of ethnic cleansing that accompanied the process of state-building in the NDH. This legacy

1941–1943 (Zagreb: Globus, 1985); Vasa Kazimirović, *NDH u svetlu nemačkih dokumenata i dnevnike Gleza fon Horstenau: 1941–1945* (Belgrade: Nova knjiga, 1987).

⁹⁶ See Nada Kisić Kolanović, “Povijest NDH kao predmet istraživanja,” *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 34, no. 3 (2002), 679–712, here p. 684. Her distinction is generally accepted in studies on the Ustaša; it is cited in Nevenko Bartulin, *The Ideology of Nation and Race: The Croatian Ustaša Regime and its Policies toward Minorities in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945*, PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, November 2006, 13–14, <http://www.jasenovac-info.com/biblioteka/Bartulin2.pdf>; and in Sabrina P. Ramet, “The NDH: An Introduction,” in Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *The Independent State of Croatia 1941–45* (London: Routledge, 2007), 3. For Fikreta Jelić-Butić, see “Ustaški pokret i hrvatsko nacionalno pitanje,” *Jugoslavenski istorijski časopis* 4 (1969), 185–190; and *Ustaše i NDH* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 1977). For Bogdan Krizman, see his massive tomes: *Ante Pavelić i Ustaše* (Zagreb: Globus, 1978); *Ustaše i Treći Reich*, 2 vols. (Zagreb: Globus, 1983); *Pavelić između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Zagreb: Globus, 1980); and *NDH između Hitlera i Mussolinija* (Zagreb: Globus, 1986).

⁹⁷ Kisić Kolanović, *Povijest NDH kao predmet istraživanja*, 684–687.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 687–697.

was then used as a weapon to discredit Croatia's separatist agenda. By contrast, in independent Croatia, the newly emerging official narrative of national history presented the Ustaša's experiment in nation- and state-building in Croatia as part of a teleological process leading to Croatia's independence in 1992. Directly promoted by President Franjo Tuđman, this narrative was allegedly meant to heal the wounds of the civil war that marred wartime Croatian society and to pave the way to societal reconciliation, by downplaying ideological differences and instead focusing on state-building efforts. Yet the ambivalent evaluation of Ustaša's history ran the risk of further fueling the apologetic approach promoted by diaspora groups since 1960 and gradually revived in post-1991 Croatia. This led to numerous allegations that the official Croatian historical discourse aimed at rehabilitating the Ustaša, or at least its state-building activity, by portraying its separatist agenda as a legitimate reaction to Belgrade authorities' authoritarian practices, while downplaying the racist, anti-Semitic and anti-Serbian character of its ideology.

The success of Croatia's war of independence and the process of political democratization that occurred in the post-Tuđman era led to new, critical scholarly perspectives on the Ustaša's history, not only liberated from Marxist stereotypes but also gradually informed by the liberal critique of fascism developed in Western Europe since the 1980s.⁹⁹ Much of this effort continued to be focused on widening the primary source basis with new state archival documents, collections of diplomatic reports, or new research tools, such as encyclopedias of major personalities in the NDH.¹⁰⁰ Some historians continued to work on "classical" topics such as the NDH's relations with Italy and Germany,¹⁰¹ or various aspects in the organization of the NDH such as the economy, police, the army, the Croatian State

⁹⁹ For an idiosyncratic but non-Marxist view of the Ustaša, see works by the U.S.-trained historian Jere Jareb: *Pola stoljeća hrvatske politike* (Zagreb: Institut za suvremenu povijest, 1995); *Zlato i novac Nezavisne Države Hrvatske izneseno u inozemstvo, 1944–1945* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 1997); and *Državno gospodarstveno povjerenstvo NDH, od kolovoza 1941. do travnja 1945, dokumentarni prikaz* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2001).

¹⁰⁰ Petar Požar, *Ustaša: dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995); Darko Stuparić, ed., *Tko je tko u NDH: Hrvatska 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Minerva, 1997).

¹⁰¹ Hrvoje Matković, *Povijest Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Zagreb: Naklada P.I.P. Pavičić, 2002); Nikola Anić, *Njemačka vojska u Hrvatskoj 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest i Dom i Svijet, 2002); Mario Jareb, "The NDH's Relations with Italy and Germany," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 459–472; Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *NDH i Italija: diplomatski odnosi* (Zagreb: Naklada Ljevak, 2001).

Assembly and the intelligence service.¹⁰² Gradually, however, academic research started to tackle new, more cultural oriented topics such as the Ustaša's ideology and its relation to mainstream Croatian nationalism,¹⁰³ its appropriation of popular culture and its cultural policies centered on the idea of regenerations through cleaning,¹⁰⁴ its policy toward Muslims,¹⁰⁵ Pavelić's charisma,¹⁰⁶ and the Ustaša's relation to religion in general and the Catholic Church in particular.¹⁰⁷

A distinct topic of research has been the Ustaša's anti-Semitism and participation in the Holocaust.¹⁰⁸ Scholars have begun to tackle more systematically the emergence and evolution of racist thinking in Croatia

¹⁰² Nikica Barić, *Ustroj kopnene vojske domobranstva Nezavisne Države Hrvatske 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Croatian Institute for History, 2003); Nada Kisić-Kolanović, "Hrvatski državni sabor Nezavisne Države Hrvatske," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 32, no. 3 (2000), 545–565; Mario Jareb, *Ustaško-domobranski pokret od nastanka do travnja 1941. godine* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga i Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2006); Davor Kovačić, *Redarstveno-obavještajni sustav nezavisne Države Hrvatske od 1941. do 1945* (Zagreb: Hrvatski institute za povijest, 2009).

¹⁰³ Mark Biondich, "We Were Defending the State: Nationalism, Myth and Memory in Twentieth Century Croatia," *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest and New York: CEU Press, 2004), 54–81.

¹⁰⁴ Rory Yeomans, *Visions of Annihilation: the Ustaša Regime and the Cultural Politics of Fascism, 1941–1945* (Pittsburgh University Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁵ Mark Biondich, "Religion and Nation in Wartime Croatia: Reflections on the Ustaša Policy of Forced Religious Conversions, 1941–1942," *Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 1 (2006), 71–116; Nada Kisić-Kolanović, *Muslimani i hrvatski nacionalizam, 1941–1945* (Zagreb: Školska knjiga, 2009).

¹⁰⁶ Ivo Goldstein, "Ante Pavelić, Charisma and National Mission in Wartime Croatia," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 2 (2006), 225–234; and Goran Miljan, *Fascist Thought in Twentieth Century Europe. Case Study of Ante Pavelić*, MA Thesis, History Department, CEU, 2009, Supervisor Constantin Iordachi.

¹⁰⁷ Jure Krišto, *Katolička crkva i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska*, vol. 2 (Zagreb: Croatian Institute for History, 1998); Mark Biondich, "Controversies surrounding the Catholic Church in Wartime Croatia, 1941–45," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 429–457; Mark Biondich, "Radical Catholicism and Fascism in Croatia, 1918–1945," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 2 (June 2007), 383–399.

¹⁰⁸ Ivo Goldstein, "Antisemitizam ustaškog pokreta," in Ljubo Boban and Nikeša Stančić, eds. *Spomenica Ljube Bobana 1933–1994* (Zagreb: Zavod za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 1996), 321–332; Ivo Goldstein and Slavko Goldstein, *Holokaust u Zagrebu* (Zagreb: Židovska općina, Novi Liber, 2001); Ivo Goldstein, *Hrvatska povijest* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2003); Ivo Goldstein, *Židovi u Zagrebu 1918–1941* (Zagreb: Novi Liber, 2004); Tomislav Dulić, "Mass Killing in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945: A Case for Comparative Research," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 255–281; and Alexander Korb, "Understanding Ustaša Violence," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 12 (2010), 1–18; "Nation-building and mass violence: The Independent State of Croatia, 1941–45," *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, ed. Jonathan C. Friedman (London, New York, 2011), 291–302; and *Im Schatten des Weltkriegs: Massengewalt der Ustaša gegen Serben, Juden und Roma in Kroatien 1941–1945* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2013).

in the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries,¹⁰⁹ the impact of these ideas on the genocidal and ethnic-cleansing policies implemented in the NDH, the role played by violence in this process and the relations among the multiple actors involved, and to assess the genocidal record of the NDH's concentration camps, most importantly Jasenovac and Stara Gradiška.¹¹⁰

An important recent trend in dealing with these research questions has emerged toward convergence of local and external strands of scholarship,¹¹¹ involving Croatian historians who have gained exposure abroad, such as Ivo Goldstein¹¹² or Mario Jareb,¹¹³ as well as prominent Western scholars specializing in fascism or radical politics in former Yugoslavia, such as Sabrina P. Ramet and Stanley G. Payne, or scholars of the younger generation, like Mark Biondich, Rory Yoemans, Nevenko Bartulin, Tomislav Dulić and Alexander Korb. Their joint effort is expected to further integrate the literature on the Ustaša within the context of comparative fascist studies, by highlighting similarities with other fascist movements of the time but also features unique to the Ustaša within a larger typology of the European extreme Right.

To sum up, despite decades of intense historiographical investigations of the history of the Ustaša, its nature and policies are still subject to scholarly or overtly political controversies. One open controversy regards the question of whether there was a coherent Ustaša ideology or instead,

¹⁰⁹ For a comprehensive treatment of the Ustaša racial ideology, see Bartulin, *The Ideology of Nation and Race*.

¹¹⁰ Ljubo Boban, *Hrvatska u arhivima izbjegličke vlade 1941–1943* (Zagreb: Globus, 1985); Ljubo Boban, "Notes and Comments: Jasenovac and the Manipulation of History," *East European Politics and Societies* 4, no. 3 (1990), 580–592; Vladimir Žerjavić, *Opsesije i megalomanije oko Bleiburga i Jasenovca* (Zagreb: Globus, 1992); Nataša Mataušić, *Jasenovac, 1941–1945: logor smrti i radni logor* (Jasenovac and Zagreb: Javna ustanova Spomen-područje Jasenovac, 2003); Mario Kevo, "Posjet poslanika Međunarodnog odbora Crvenog križa logorima Jasenovac i Stara Gradiška u ljeto 1944," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 40, no. 2 (2008), 547–584. See also the documentation produced by the Jasenovac Memorial Site and Memorial Museum, Croatia: *JASENOVAC Memorial Site*, ed. by Tea Benčić Rimay (Jasenovac: Public Institution Jasenovac Memorial Site, 2006); Nataša Mataušić, *Jasenovac* (Jasenovac: Public Institution Jasenovac Memorial Site, n.y.).

¹¹¹ For a relevant example, see the special issue "The Independent State of Croatia (NDH), 1941–45," published by *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 399–550, to which local as well as foreign researchers contributed. The issue was subsequently published as a book: Ramet, ed., *The Independent State of Croatia 1941–45*; published in Croatian, in an expanded edition, as Sabrina P. Ramet, ed. *Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Zagreb: Alinea, 2009).

¹¹² Ivo Goldstein, "The Independent State of Croatia in 1941: On the Road to Catastrophe," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 417–427.

¹¹³ Mario Jareb, "The NDH's Relations with Italy and Germany," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 7, no. 4 (2006), 459–472.

only a non-systematized body of borrowed or insufficiently elaborated political claims. On the basis of existing primary and secondary evidence, it appears clear, to this author at least, that, contrary to the main claims of communist historiography, the Ustaša's ideology was not a simple copy of the more developed Italian or Nazi German variants. However, its roots, which go back to the turn-of-the-century Croat nationalism in the Habsburg Empire, and its link with circles of Habsburg army officers and with Croat students' and workers' movements, need to be more thoroughly investigated. In addition, in order to illuminate the process of ideological evolution leading to the articulation of clear fascist characteristics, more research is needed on the evolution of the political thought of Pavelić and of other Ustaša leaders. This would enable researchers to uncover the main features of the Ustaša's ideology, to establish the elements of continuity but also of rupture with the Croat nationalist traditions, to further identify German and Italian ideological or policy influences and to thus illuminate the Ustaša's peculiar combination of local and external ideological traits. Other under-researched topics are the Ustaša's tendency to establish a political religion, the peculiar rites, rituals and forms of socialization associated with it, and its impact on the Ustaša's relation to the Catholic Church. These subjects need to be approached from new theoretical angles, to avoid falling back on older but largely unproductive directions of research, such as the thesis on clerical fascism. The history of the Independent State of Croatia also necessitates further inquiries—not so much concerning its military or diplomatic relations to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, which have already been scrutinized by a number of scholars, but about its internal totalitarian organization and policies; the relationship between nationalism, ethnic cleansing, and racism; and the horrific record of its genocidal policies. Finally, more emphasis should be put on transnational entanglements between the Ustaša and other, neighboring or more distant fascist movements and regimes within the context of the Nazi "New European Order."

1.2.3. *Bulgaria*

Bulgarian communist historiography demonstrates a great expansion and overstretch of the concept of fascism to refer almost indiscriminately to all interwar conservative right-wing or monarchic-authoritarian regimes (1923–1944).¹¹⁴ The hard-line interpretation of interwar politics as a heroic

¹¹⁴ For comprehensive overviews on the evolution of post-communist Bulgarian historiography with a special focus on debates over fascism, which have informed the

fight of the Communist Party against an almost continuous fascist rule had its origins in the interwar period. It was linked to the violent conflict between Alexandăr Tsankov's 1923 government and the Bulgarian communists led by Georgi Dimitrov, which prompted the Comintern's 1925 denunciation of Tsankov's government as a "fascist clique." In the post-1945 period, the thesis of an almost uninterrupted fascist rule in interwar Bulgaria was imposed on official communist Bulgarian historiography by Dimitrov, who amassed enormous authority and prestige due to his impressive record of antifascist struggle (evidenced by his performance in the Leipzig trial), his contribution to the crystallization of the 1935 Comintern dogma on fascism and his overwhelming political influence as the first prime minister of communist Bulgaria.

Bulgarian historiography had great difficulties in liberating itself from the main tenets of Dimitrov's thesis, which was enshrined in the first Stalinist synthesis on the history of Bulgaria.¹¹⁵ It did so only gradually and under the influence of other socialist historiographies in the region.¹¹⁶ But the continuous effort to break with the Dimitrovist dogma led to a series of historiographical debates spanning the entire communist period (1965–1966; 1968; 1983), and prolonged—in a new mode—well into the post-communist period (1996). The major breakthrough in the debates was the denial of the fascist character of interwar authoritarian regimes. Once this thesis was at last refuted, Bulgarian historiography was left to answer the question anew: Was there fascism in interwar Bulgaria? To provide

current summary, see Nikolaj Poppetrov, "Faschismus in Bulgarien. Geschichte und Geschichtsschreibung," *Südost-Forschungen* 41 (1982), 199–218; Nikolaj Poppetrov, "Die bulgarische Geschichtswissenschaft über die Probleme des bulgarischen Faschismus," *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3 (1986), 78–93; Ivan Elenkov and Daniela Koleva, "Historical Studies in Post-Communist Bulgaria: Between Academic Standards and Political Agendas," in *Narratives Unbound: Historical Studies in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, eds. Sorin Antohi, Bálaazs Trencsényi and Péter Apor (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 409–486. For a comprehensive treatment of this issue, see Roumen Daskalov, "The Debate on Fascism and the Anti-Fascist Struggles," chapter 3 in *Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian Historiography—From Stambolov to Zhivkov* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), 145–222, first published in Bulgarian as *Ot Stambolov do Zhivkov: Golemite spорове za novata bălgarska istoriya* (Sofia: IK Gutenberg, 2009).

¹¹⁵ See Dimităr Konstantinov Kosev, et al., *Istoriya na Bălgaria v dva toma*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1955), discussed in Daskalov, *From Stambolov to Zhivkov*, 148.

¹¹⁶ Note the 1972 meeting between Bulgarian and Polish historians initiated by the Institute of Balkan Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, and the Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw. During this meeting, Polish historian Janusz Żarnowski disagreed with the thesis of Bulgarian historiography that Bulgaria's interwar political regime was fascist. Żarnowski instead asserted its conservative character, in line with the interpretation put forward by Franciszek Ryszka in Poland and Miklós Lackó in Hungary. For details, see Daskalov, *From Stambolov to Zhivkov*, 157, 171.

answers to this question, which was again the subject of a major debate organized in 1996 by the political journal *Demokrateski Pregled*, historians turned their attention to the plethora of interwar extreme right-wing movements, their doctrine, organization and relation to foreign models.

Paradoxically, although Marxist historiography labeled interwar Bulgaria as fascist, the history and program of the local fascist movements—most notably the National Social Movement, the Union of Bulgarian National Legions, and the Warriors for the Advancement of the Bulgarian Spirit—was largely neglected. Research in the field was (re)vitalized mostly by Nikolay Poppetrov, who in 1982 managed to publish a pioneering article in Germany on Bulgarian fascism, soon followed by other programmatic articles that identified a new research agenda, spelled out the challenges ahead in the field, and attempting to set Bulgarian fascism in regional and continental contexts.¹¹⁷ Poppetrov persistently followed this research agenda, which resulted in the first monograph on grass-roots fascism in interwar Bulgaria, published in 2008, supplemented by a massive and highly valuable collection of primary sources, published in 2009.¹¹⁸ Overall, while the history of Bulgarian fascism requires further research, the greater, long-term debate on fascism can be taken to illustrate in many ways “the condition and tasks of contemporary Bulgarian historiography.”¹¹⁹

1.2.4. Greece

Finally, interwar Greece has received limited attention in comparative fascist studies, mostly on the grounds that the country lacked a genuine, vigorous mass “fascist” movement comparable in size and importance with the Ustaša or the Iron Guard. Indeed, although Greek political life in the interwar period was highly unstable, marked by the “Great Schism” between the Liberal Venizelist Party and the anti-Venizelist Populist Party, the fascist response to the grave postwar dislocations facing Greece

¹¹⁷ See Nikolaj Poppetrov, “Die Geschichtsschreibung in der BRD über den Faschismus auf der Balkanhalbinsel,” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 3 (1988), 91–101; “Bolgarskiy fashizm v balkanskom i evropeyskom kontekste (Kratkoe istoriograficheskoe obozrenie i opyt postroeniya modeli),” *Bulgarian Historical Review* 1 (1993), 146–174; and “Vāzmozhnostta za dialog ili ‘diskusiite’ za bālgarskiya fashizām,” *Demokrateski Pregled* 4–5 (1996), 382–288.

¹¹⁸ Nikolay Poppetrov: *Fashizmāt v Bālgariya: Razvitie i proyavi* (Sofia: Kama, 2008); and *Sotsialno nalyavo, natsionalizmāt–napred: Programni i organizatsionni dokumenti na bālgarski avtoritaristki natsionalisticheski formatsii* (Sofia: Gutenberg 2009).

¹¹⁹ Elenkov and Koleva, *Historical Studies in Post-Communist Bulgaria*, 484.

was “negligible,” as David Close put it.¹²⁰ Scholarship on the minor Greek fascist movements—such as the National Union of Greece (EEE), founded in 1927, or the National Socialist Political Organization (ESPO), organized by Dr. Speros Sterodemas during the wartime occupation of Greece by the Axis powers (and the country’s largest fascist group, with about 2,000 members)—is thus scarce, and the case study of Greece is routinely left out of major overviews of fascism.

More attention has been devoted to General Ioannis Metaxas’s rule (1936–1941); its contradictory nature has been the subject of numerous scholarly controversies. Influenced by the Comintern’s dogma on fascism, classical Marxist works treated Metaxas’s “4th of August” regime as unambiguously fascist.¹²¹ By contrast, non-Marxist works argued that the Metaxas regime was conservative-authoritarian or, in the words of J.L. Hondros, a “royal bureaucratic dictatorship,”¹²² yet not fascist. Indeed, the Metaxas regime exhibited numerous fascist trappings, but it was ultimately a case of superficial, mimetic fascistization.¹²³ Close, for example, asserts that the Metaxas regime resembled the regimes of Salazar and Pétain rather than that of Hitler or Mussolini, due to the common influence of Charles Maurras’s integral nationalism.¹²⁴

More recently, several scholars have argued that Metaxas’s rule can be more productively studied within the framework of comparative fascism studies. Michael Mann suggested that the political regime of Greece could be characterized as semi-authoritarian until Metaxas’s 1936 coup, semi-reactionary authoritarian in the first two years of Metaxas’s rule (1936–1938) and monarcho-fascist after 1938 until its end in 1941.¹²⁵ Aristotle

¹²⁰ See also David Close, “Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–1945,” in Blinkhorn, ed. *Fascists and Conservatives*, 202.

¹²¹ Pandelis Pouliopoulos, *Ta laika metopa, o 2os Pankosmios Polemos, i Diktatoria tis 4is Augoustou* (Athens: Protoporiaki Vivliothiki, 1958); Nikos Psyroukis, *To Kathestos tis 4is Augoustou* (Athens: Epikairoitita, 1975); Spiros H. Linardatos, *Tetarti Augoustou* (Athens: Themelio, 1975), 9–30.

¹²² J.L. Hondros, *Occupation and Resistance: The Greek Agony, 1941–44* (New York, 1983), 26, cited in Close, “Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–1945,” 205.

¹²³ See Yannis Andricopoulos, “The Power Base of Greek Authoritarianism,” in *Who Were the Fascists?* eds. Ugelvik, Hagtvat and Myklebust, 568–584; Blinkhorn, *Fascism and the Right in Europe, 1919–1945*, 110.

¹²⁴ Close, “Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–1945,” 210.

¹²⁵ Mann, *Fascists*, 45–46. See also Mogens Pelt, “The Establishment and Development of the Metaxas Dictatorship in the Content of Fascism and Nazism, 1936–41,” in *International Fascism, 1919–45*, eds. Gert Sorensen and Robert Mallett (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), 143–172; Marina Petrakis, *The Metaxas Myth: Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece* (London and New York: Tauris, 2006).

Kallis goes further in this argumentative direction, claiming that the Metaxas regime was a paramount example of a wider process of convergence and hybridization between conservative and radical right-wing or fascist parties in Europe. He concluded that even if Metaxas's rule lacked a fascist mass movement with a revolutionary ideology, it was nevertheless an experiment in radical rule in a fascist vein which is worth investigating from the perspective of fascist studies.¹²⁶

* * *

In conclusion, fascism has remained, by and large, a marginalized topic of non-systematic research in communist historiography in Southeastern Europe. A certain revival of interest in the history of fascist movements in the region has occurred only in the past two decades. This renewed interest has to do primarily with the major changes that have affected the writing of history in the region. After decades of political-ideological control and censorship, the post-1989 liberalization of historiographical discourses has enabled historians to openly tackle issues that had previously been considered taboo. Fascism figured prominently on this "revisionist" agenda, as under the communist regime, research on this topic was subject to political censorship. But the recent research interest in the history of fascism has not been motivated simply by scholarly concerns. First, the study of fascism has coincided with a "memory boom" that has attempted to recapture the "true" national history repressed under the communist regimes. In this context, the history of the twentieth century, especially of fascism and communism, has dominated public and political debates; the way one approaches this comparison is an indication of the his or her political orientation, at the Right or Left of the political spectrum. Second, the history of fascism has been intrinsically linked with key issues of historical investigation, such as interethnic relations, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, thus necessitating a more ample historiographical scrutiny. Third, the collapse of "real existing socialism" has led to a revival of nationalism throughout the former Soviet bloc. Many ideological elements and patterns of mass mobilization specific to interwar nationalist movements have energetically resurfaced in the post-communist period, in a new mode, thus making the study of interwar fascism imperative for understanding radical politics. Non-Marxist perspectives on fascism have

¹²⁶ Aristotle Kallis, "Neither Fascist nor Authoritarian: The 4th of August Regime in Greece (1936–1941) and the Dynamics of Fascistisation in 1930s Europe," *East Central Europe* 37, nos. 1–2 (2010), 303–330.

done much to liberate the field from political stereotypes. Yet too often historians of fascism have lacked a well-developed critical approach to the topic, thus consciously or unconsciously running the risk of rehabilitating fascism.

I.3. *Fascism as Charismatic Ultra-Nationalism:
A New Conceptual Framework*

My own theoretical and methodological approach to fascism is interdisciplinary, with an emphasis on culturally-oriented methodologies; integrative, clustering concepts¹²⁷ that have been too often analyzed separately, such as nationalism, messianism, charisma and political religions; and comparative and transnational, with a focus on the history of transfers and entanglements among fascist movements and regimes in Europe. In building the theoretical foundations of my approach, I take as a starting point the debate over what was, rather presumptuously, proclaimed as the “new consensus” in fascist studies emerging since the 1990s around the work of George Mosse, Emilio Gentile, Stanley Payne, Roger Griffin, and more recently Michael Mann, among others. However, I do not understand this “consensus” as an agreement over a particular ideal-type definition of the fascist ideological minimum, as some authors have tended to interpret it. Instead, I detect a loose and dynamic convergence in research in the recent approaches to fascism around several major interpretative or analytical tenets that I succinctly summarize below. The first is that fascism has an ideology of its own and is thus a comprehensive “ism.” The second is that, in order to understand that ideology, we need to study its original sources and to try to understand and deconstruct its intellectual references, its symbols and political aims “from the inside out,” as George Mosse put it.¹²⁸ Naturally, this approach does not intend to rehabilitate fascism by taking its ideological claims at face value but argues that, in order to explain fascism’s mass appeal, we need to understand the fascist worldview, its own “culture” and the way that culture appealed to the masses. The third is that fascism is a form of hyper- or ultra-nationalism that aims at radically transforming society through violent revolutionary means. These inter-related statements constitute the basis for a culturalist approach to the history of interwar fascism.

¹²⁷ For an appeal to cluster concepts in fascist studies, see Griffin.

¹²⁸ Mosse, “Toward a General Theory of Fascism,” x.

While sharing common ground with major culturalist interpretations of fascism, my own approach tries to enrich or even departs from the existing research in significant ways. A key dimension of my approach is the effort to grasp the analytical implications of treating fascism as a form of nationalism. While this assertion seems to be commonplace in fascist studies, most authors in fact treat fascism as a new political ideology of the interwar period, artificially separating it from its prewar intellectual and political roots. In line with Moses, I argue that we need to go back to the “bedrock” of nationalism as a belief system and to approach it from a long-term historical perspective, looking at the cultural resources fascists had at hand in articulating their own view about the nation as well as at the innovations brought about by the fascist ideology. In this paper, I focus on two main issues that are central to my approach to fascism: 1) fascism’s relation to the sacralization of politics in general and to religion in particular, most manifest in its tendency to create fascist political religions; and, in close connection to the first issue, 2) fascism as a form of charismatic nationalism.

1.3.1. *Fascism as a Political Religion*

First, I contend that, in order to understand the relationship between fascism and religion, one needs to understand the nature of the “holy” and its transformation during the modern period. To substantiate this claim, my approach merges two streams of literature that have so far evolved along separate lines. One focuses on political religions as an integral dimension of totalitarian regimes (either fascist or communist), and the other focuses on nationalism, in general, as being a political religion in its own right.

The concept of “political religion” was first defined in the interwar period by Protestant and Catholic intellectuals opposed to fascism, such as Luigi Sturzo, Adolf Keller, Paul Tillich, Gerhard Leibholz and, most importantly, by the German political philosopher Eric Voegelin.¹²⁹ Originally, the concept referred to the anti-Christian character of totalitarian regimes and their tendency to subvert established churches and take over some of the main functions of traditional religions. A similar critique, but

¹²⁹ Eric Voegelin: *Die Politische Religionen* (Vienna: Bermann-Fischen Verlag, 1938), published in English as *The Political Religions* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 1986); *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1952); *Hitler and the Germans* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999); *Religion and the Rise of Modernity* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998).

from a liberal position, was advanced by the French philosopher Raymond Aron, who denounced the totalizing quest and the anti-Enlightenment nature of totalitarian political religions in interwar Europe.¹³⁰ After World War II, in the political context of the Cold War, political religions were re-evaluated as instruments of sacralizing and institutionalizing totalizing ideologies which played an important role in the functioning of totalitarian regimes, complementing their repressive apparatus.¹³¹ In fascist studies, the approach on political religions developed mostly in Italian historiography; Emilio Gentile, in particular, developed a new, well-structured theoretical framework for the study of fascism, based on the conceptual triad of the sacralization of politics, totalitarianism and the emergence of political religion. The translation of Gentile's works into English¹³² further stimulated interest in the issue of political religions and resulted in a plethora of monographs, edited works, thematic issues and specialized journals.¹³³ Since 2000, scholarly research in the field has thus taken a new turn, concentrating mostly on the nexus of fascism, totalitarianism and political religions (see the agenda promoted by the journal

¹³⁰ Raymond Aron, *Démocratie et totalitarisme* (Paris: Gallimard, 1965), published in English as *Democracy and Totalitarianism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1968).

¹³¹ Friedrich and Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, 300–302; Karl Dietrich Bracher, *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structures, and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), 20–31, esp. 22; Waldemar Gurian, "Totalitarianism as Political Religion," in *Totalitarianism*, ed. Friedrich, 119–129.

¹³² On the sacralization of politics, see Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*; and "The Sacralisation of Politics," 18–55. On political religions, see Gentile "Fascism as Political Religion," 229–251; "Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion," 326–375; and "Political Religion: A Concept and its Critics," 19–32; as well as *Politics as Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

¹³³ See, among others, Phillipe Burrin, "Political Religion: The Relevance of a Concept," *History and Theory* 9, nos. 1–2 (1997), 321–349; Hans Maier and Michael Schäfer, eds., *Totalitarismus und Politische Religionen. Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs*, 3 vols. (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1997–2003); Hans Maier, *Politische Religionen. Die totalitären Regime und das Christentum* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1995); Michael Ley and Julius H. Schoeps, *Der Nationalsozialismus als politische Religion* (Bodenheim b. Mainz: Philo Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997); Michael Ley, *Apokalypse und Moderne. Ausätze zu politischen Religionen* (Vienna: Sonderzahl-Verlag-Ges., 1997); Claus-Ekkehard Bärsch, *Die politische Religion des Nationalsozialismus: die religiöse Dimension der NS-Ideologie in den Schriften von Dietrich Eckart, Joseph Goebbels, Alfred Rosenberg und Adolf Hitler* (Munich: W. Fink., 1998); Markus Huttner, *Totalitarismus und säkulare Religionen: zur Frühgeschichte totalitarismuskritischer Begriffs- und Theoriebildung in Grossbritannien* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1998); Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism, Totalitarianism and Political Religion* (London: Routledge, 2005); Martin Blinkhorn, "Afterthoughts, Route Maps and Landscapes: Historians, 'Fascist Studies' and the Study of Fascism," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 5, no. 3 (2004), 507–526.

Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 2000–2010, published since 2011 under the name *Politics, Religion, and Ideology*).

The second approach is mostly indebted to George Mosse. In a pioneering book titled *The Nationalization of the Masses*, Mosse underscored the relationship between nineteenth-century nationalism and interwar fascism, pointing out that “what we call fascist style was in reality the climax of a ‘new politics’ based upon the emerging eighteenth-century idea of popular sovereignty.”¹³⁴ In his view, the “general will” became a “secular religion,” expressed through a wide range of myths and symbols aiming at recreating the nation as a unified, organic community. The essence of the new style of politics was the aestheticization of politics, “the force which linked myths, symbols, and the feeling of the masses.” Mosse pointed out that fascism created “a theology which provided the framework for national worship.” He also emphasized the organic link between fascism and nationalism. It was Romantic nationalism that made symbols the essence of the new style of politics. Holy flames, flags, songs and national monuments “had always played a cardinal role in Christianity and now in a secularized form they become part and parcel of German national worship.” Mosse’s pioneering approach has opened a new research agenda in fascist studies. Yet it is important to stress that Mosse described nationalism as a “secular religion,” or a substitute for traditional religion, implying a clear break between the two.

In contrast to Mosse, authors such as Elie Kedourie, Conor Cruise O’Brien, Adrian Hastings and Anthony Smith emphasized the fluid boundaries between religion and modern nationalist ideologies, highlighting the Christian *origins* of nationalist ideology.¹³⁵ Anthony Smith, in particular, underscored, in a recent book evocatively entitled *Sacred Causes*, the biblical background and pre-modern traditions of nationalism. Building on his own ethno-symbolic approach to nationalism and on Elie Kedourie’s insights on the relationship between nationalism and religion, Smith argues that, although nationalism was originally conceived as a secular ideology, biblical and religious motives actually played a more

¹³⁴ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1991), 1.

¹³⁵ Adrian Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1960); Conor Cruise O’Brien, *God-Land: Reflections on Religion and Nationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

important role in the construction of modern nationalist ideologies than that of secular ones.¹³⁶ In Smith's view, the essence of nationalism as a secular ideology is the striving for human self-emancipation. But since this emancipation can only mean the fulfillment of the true spirit and destiny of the nation, nationalism necessarily had to incorporate "the very core of traditional religions, their conception of the sacred and their rites of salvation."¹³⁷

For Smith, nationalism is a secular political ideology, but it is also "a form of culture and a type of belief-system whose object is the nation conceived as a sacred communion."¹³⁸ Building on recent insights on the close relationship between nationalism and religion, Smith treats nationalism as a "political religion," arguing that the grid of its belief system is made up of community, territory, history and destiny. The heart of this political religion is the cult of authenticity: its core is "the salvation drama of nationalism." The path to salvation is the path of rediscovering authenticity, through the restoration of the national character and of the essential national features of the respective people. That restoration is to be achieved through 1) re-rooting the nation, by a return to nature and the ancestral land; and 2) the rediscovery of the true self, through a process of spiritual or "inner-worldly" transformation meant to uncover the pure, unmixed elements of one's national identity. Nationalism thus promotes the re-creation of the sacred community of people as an ethnic, cultic and moral-legal entity. In order to uncover the original, pristine or autochthonous elements, nationalism proclaims the elevation of the people, especially of the peasantry, to the rank of the repository of the national values and of national authenticity.

Smith has also pointed out that religion in general, and the idea of the divine election in particular, have been central ingredients in the development of national ideologies, to the point of determining the nature of certain forms of nationalism.¹³⁹ Symbols and myths of ethnic election can be found in various epochs or historical regions, such the ancient Near East, Judea, Greece, Armenia and Persia, as well as in medieval Byzantium, Russia and Western Europe, mobilizing and inspiring ethnic survival. Smith outlines four main patterns of ethnic survival: imperial-dynastic, communal-demotic, emigrant-colonist and diaspora-restoration,

¹³⁶ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*, viii.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁹ Smith, *Chosen Peoples*.

each of them perpetuating and adapting old myths of ethnic election in various ways.¹⁴⁰

In line with Smith, I explore the sacred roots of modern nationalism and their role in redefining the nation in the modern period, but focusing mostly on Southeastern European cases. In my work, I aim nevertheless to take Smith's approach a step further, by bridging his view on nationalism as a political religion with the literature on fascism as a totalitarian political religion. I contend that a religious core runs through the modern nationalist myths, symbols and rituals, crystallized in the Romantic period and reactivated in a new mode in the interwar period.¹⁴¹ In order to substantiate this claim, I explore the deep cultural resources and tradition of nationalism as a political religion, in an effort to uncover the sacred foundations of the national identity—that common ground that bonds the members of the nation through rites and rituals. I focus on the interplay between these pre-existing cultural traditions and fascism as a nationalist belief system, paying attention to the issue of path-dependency. More specifically, I identify a particular type of nationalism, which I call “charismatic nationalism,” encompassing both the idea of national salvation and the idea of totalitarian political legitimization and organization.

I.3.2. *Fascism as a Form of Charismatic Nationalism*

The second key dimension of my approach is the assertion that fascism is a particular form of charismatic nationalism. In analytical terms, my main aim is to integrate the charismatic dimension of fascism at the very core of the ideal-type definition of the fascist minimum and as a central dimension guiding empirical research. My research focuses on the process of molding the Romantic tradition of messianic nationalism into the charismatic ideological matrix of fascism.

The concept of charisma was often employed by fascist propaganda to explain the nature of fascist leadership and organization, a clear indication that fascist leaders were well aware of the distinct nature of their claim to power.¹⁴² Yet the term entered political dictionaries only in the 1950s and has been more systematically applied to the study of fascism

¹⁴⁰ Anthony D. Smith, “Chosen Peoples: Why Ethnic Groups Survive,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 15, no. 3 (1992), 436–457.

¹⁴¹ On this topic, see Iordachi, “God's Chosen Warriors,” 316–357.

¹⁴² In 1940 the Legionary Alexandru Rada proclaimed: “The Duce, the Fuhrer, the Captain transform the nation into a permanent force, into a ‘corpus mysticus’ freed of limitations. This is the deepest sense of the ‘totality,’ of the ‘consensus,’ of ‘ecumenicity’

only since the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁴³ More recently, charismatic leadership has been defined as a feature of “generic fascism” in typologies of fascism authored by Stanley G. Payne, Roger Eatwell, Roger Griffin and others.¹⁴⁴ However, charisma is often relegated to either an issue of political style and organization or treated as a marginal feature rather than as a core characteristic of historical fascism.

I argue that in fascist studies, charisma is often improperly reduced to the issue of the cult of the leader. In my view, charisma should be reconceptualized as a claim on authority both legitimizing and organizing power. To this end, my approach strives to first recover the original religious connotations of the concept of charisma. As is well known, the term “charisma” originated in the field of religion; it was often employed in theological discourses. Etymologically, the word comes from Greek and is translated as “the gift of grace” (*charis*- meaning grace and *-ma* denoting the action of giving). The term does not have a direct equivalent in Latin, being usually translated as “*gratia gratis date*.”¹⁴⁵ It was the German sociologist Max Weber who picked up the concept of charisma from religious studies and applied it to the realm of politics. Following Weber, political analysts have further secularized the concept of charisma but have often also “trivialized” it to stand for personal attraction, magnetism or notoriety. In so doing, they lost sight of the religious connotations of the concept as a divinely bestowed gift of grace, which is crucial for understanding the charismatic type of authority.

Secondly, I argue that we need to explore more thoroughly the social connotation of the concept of charisma. Weber approached charisma as

which legitimizes and fulfills the form Charisma.” Alexandru Randa, “The Wings of the Archangel,” *Axa* (December 5, 1940), 1.

¹⁴³ See Joseph Nyomarkay, *Charisma and Factionalism in the Nazi Party* (Minneapolis, 1967); Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party: 1919–1945*, 2 vols. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1969, 1973); and, more recently, Maurizio Bach, *Die charismatischen Führerdiktaturen: Drittes Reich und italienischer Faschismus im Vergleich ihrer Herrschaftsstrukturen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1990). On Fascist Italy, see Emilio Gentile, “Mussolini’s Charisma,” *Modern Italy* 3, no. 2 (1998), 219–235; and Piero Melograni, “The Cult of the Duce in Mussolini’s Italy,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 11, no. 4 (1976), 221–237.

¹⁴⁴ For such accounts of the place of charisma in ideal-type definitions of fascism, see, for example, Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914–1945*, 6–8; and Griffin, *Fascism*, 5. For a recent reconceptualization of charisma and a reassessment of its relevance for fascist studies, see António Costa Pinto, Roger Eatwell and Stein Ugelvik Larsen, eds., *Charisma and Fascism in Interwar Europe* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

¹⁴⁵ Albert Vanhoye, *I carismi nel Nuovo Testamento* (Rome: Gregorian and Biblical Press, 2011), 5–7.

"a certain quality of an *individual personality*."¹⁴⁶ He also pointed out the need for the validation of charismatic leaders by their followers and noted that charisma produces a peculiar social structure, a staff and an apparatus of service and resources adapted to the leader's mission,¹⁴⁷ thus accounting for the creation of charismatic communities (*Gemeinde*), based on an emotional form of communal relationship (*Vergemeinschaftung*).¹⁴⁸ However, although Max Weber contributed to the theory of nationalism and was himself an active and devoted German nationalist, he did not elaborate on the connection between charismatic authority and nationalism as an ideology and form of politics. Building on Weber's work, several political scientists underscored the social consequences of charismatic authority for the organization of social groups, theorizing that charismatic communities were alternative forms of political communities.¹⁴⁹ Yet they invariably failed to systematically explore the link between charismatic claims and national communities and ideologies.

In order to account for the fascist doctrine of national salvation and its view of the nation as a divinely inspired community, I put forward the concept of "charismatic nationalism." This I define as an ideology that regards the nation as an elect community of shared destiny living in a sacred homeland which, on the basis of a glorious past, claims a divine mission leading to salvation through sacrifice under the guidance of a charismatic leader. The concept of charismatic nationalism illuminates the nature of the "holy" or the "sacred" in nationalism, differentiating it from both established forms of traditional religions and modern secular ideologies. Charisma has a transcendental dimension, since the belief in a divine, supernatural mission depends on the belief in the (Christian) God as the absolute form of authority, even if that supreme divinity is different from the image of God as propagated by established churches: "We believe in God," claimed Hitler, "but it is our God, the God of the Germans."¹⁵⁰ "We, Legionaries, are Christians," claimed the Romanian

¹⁴⁶ Max Weber, "The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization," in *Max Weber on Charisma and Institution Building*, ed. S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1968), 48, my emphasis.

¹⁴⁷ Max Weber, "Charisma and its Transformation," in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology*, eds. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), vol. 2, 1119.

¹⁴⁸ Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 243.

¹⁴⁹ James Gregor, *The Ideology of Fascism* (New York: Free Press, 1969); Russell A. Berman, *The Rise of Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

¹⁵⁰ Hitler's first, nocturnal speech in the film *The Triumph of the Will*, directed by Leni Riefenstahl, 1936.

Legionary ideologue Alexandru Cantacuzino, "we believe in our Savior Jesus Christ, we believe in a single, almighty God who give life and death and regulates our fate, a God with whom we communicate and interact and yet a God who is outside and above our human norms and events."¹⁵¹ This is a reformulation of the concept of the "holy," or the "sacred," that originated in palingenetic discourses on society, was adopted by Romantic nationalism, was redefined and amplified at the turn of the century and was implemented in political practices during the interwar period. The religious roots of nationalism prepared the ground for claims of charismatic leadership for achieving national unity and internal renewal, while the belief in the doctrine of the chosen people gave birth to an extreme form of national self-glorification. The corollaries of interwar charismatic nationalism are not simply the ideas of the "holy" community, history and territory, arguably part of any form of nationalism, but a new way of defining the holy, which originates not from the numinous¹⁵² but from the charismatic leader. In other words, interwar charismatic nationalism merged the idea of the holy, elected national community with that of the divine mission of the charismatic leader as a chosen prophet or savior of the nation, and applied them to political practice.

I find charisma to be the most integrative aspect of the fascist ideology because it illuminates several of its interrelated claims, such as: 1) the relation between Divinity and the charismatic leader; 2) the idea of a divine election and mission to fulfill God's commandments; 3) the relation between divinity and the chosen people; 4) the relationship between the charismatic leader and his followers; 5) the profile and expectations of the followers; and 6) the people and their mission in relation to the mankind, in its entirety. From an analytical point of view, charisma can serve as a tool for clustering key concepts pertaining to fascism into an integrative theoretical framework. So understood, the charismatic nature of fascism accounts for the merger between the ideology of messianic nationalism and the post-war paramilitary revolutionary movements of change based on oath-taking, totalizing authority, leading to the development of new forms of political religion.

On this basis, I therefore claim that, as a political ideology, fascism is a form of charismatic nationalism working toward the redemption and

¹⁵¹ Alexandru Cantacuzino, *Opere* (1940); *Opere complete* (Munich, 1940), 17.

¹⁵² On the concept of the numinous, see Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

salvation of the patriarchal national community in this world; this salvation is understood as a fulfillment of the national character through a return to its mythical origins by means of the terrestrial action of the charismatic leader and the paramilitary movement he organized, thus leading to the ethnic, racial or religious purification of the nation through the removal of the unwanted “others,” the rebirth and regeneration of the self through new forms of socialization based on a new ethical code of conduct leading to the creation of the new man, and the emancipation of the status of the respective people in international affairs. I will exemplify this working definition of fascism with the case of the Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania and the Ustaša movement in Croatia.

PART II: CHARISMA AND FASCISM: THE LEGION OF THE ARCHANGEL MICHAEL AND THE USTAŠA MOVEMENT

II.1. *Greater Romania and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia*

Having laid down my own approach to fascism, I now turn to an issue-oriented comparison between the most significant fascist movements in the Balkans, Romania's Legion of the Archangel Michael and Croatia's Ustaša movement. My aim is not to provide an all-encompassing analysis of the two movements but to deconstruct the main components of their ideologies, with a focus on the cult of authenticity, specific to the political religion of nationalism; charismatic leadership and its impact on the two movements' rites, rituals and party organization; their terrorist activities; and the idea of rebirth and regeneration and its negative corollary, the idea of “cleansing” the national community through the elimination of all “alien” bodies.

The violent projects of national salvation and regeneration promoted by the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Ustaša movement cannot be understood without taking into account the political-institutional context of interwar Greater Romania and of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. The prewar entities of Serbia and Croatia on the one hand, and the Old Kingdom of Romania on the other, were fully transformed by the experience of World War I. Although, during the war, Serbia and Romania suffered massive human losses and experienced long periods of military occupation, they both emerged from the war as victorious parties within the Entente's camp. First, Romania managed to double its size (from 130,177 sq. km. in 1914 to 295,049 sq. km.

in 1919) and population (from 7,771,341 inhabitants in 1914 to 14,669,841 in 1919). For its part, the Kingdom of Serbia was the main catalyst of the establishment of a new, larger "South Slav" state. On November 13, 1918, it incorporated the Kingdom of Montenegro, while on December 1 it united with the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (*Država Slovenca, Hrvata i Srba*, proclaimed on October 28 and encompassing all South Slavs of Austria-Hungary) to constitute a new state called the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with a territory of 247,542 sq. km. and a population of almost 12 million inhabitants in 1921.

Despite these remarkable geopolitical successes in state-building, the processes of postwar internal integration of each new state proved arduous. These process generated numerous "structural crises" related to the establishment and legitimization of a new political order, conflicts among regional political groupings in the process of state unification, the expansion of a bureaucratized state administration and its relation to local communities, the integration and assimilation of ethnic minorities, and dilemmas of collective identity.

These processes of integration were further hampered by the fact that both states were heterogeneous assemblies of multiple historical provinces, shaped by distinct but long-lasting imperial legacies. Greater Romania (1918–1940) came into being following a process of gradual unification similar to the Italian *risorgimento*. To the Old Kingdom, made up of the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia (unified in 1859), was added in 1878 the former Ottoman province of Dobruđa and, in 1918, the province of Bessarabia—occupied by Russia in the period 1812–1918; Transylvania, the Banat, Maramureș, and the Partium, which had been part of the Hungarian part of Austria-Hungary; and Bukovina, a former part of the Austrian part of the Monarchy. Moreover, although Greater Romania was conceived as a nation-state "of" ethnic Romanians as the "titular" nation—who represented 12,981,324 inhabitants or 71.9 percent of the total population in 1930—the country also encompassed a relatively high ratio of minorities, amounting to 28.1 percent.¹⁵³ Allegedly favored in the former imperial order, the Jews, Hungarians and Germans fell, in the eyes of the Romanians, into the category of "imperial" or "high-status"

¹⁵³ These were as follows: Hungarians (1,425,507 or 7.9 percent), Germans (745,421 or 4.1 percent), Jews (728,151 or 4.0 percent), Ruthenians (582,115 or 3.2 percent), Russians (409,150 or 2.3 percent), Bulgarians (366,384 or 2.0 percent), Gypsies (263,501 or 1.5 percent), Turks (154,772 or 0.9 percent) and Tartars (22,141 or 0.1 percent), out of a total population of 18,057,028. *Anuarul Statistic al României, 1939 și 1940*, 44–45.

minorities, as they used to dominate liberal professions and state bureaucracy, mostly in major cities.

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was even more heterogeneous than Greater Romania. To the former Kingdom of Montenegro and the recently enlarged Kingdom of Serbia were added Croatia, Slavonia and Vojvodina, provinces that belonged to the Hungarian part of the Monarchy; Carniola, Styria and Dalmatia, former parts of the Austrian half; and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a former administrative experiment under the Monarchy's Ministry of Finance.¹⁵⁴ In addition, the new state was a genuine mosaic of languages, religions, cultures and nationalities, loosely subsumed under the (contested) banner of South-Slav collective identity.

After succeeding at political unification, political elites in both states faced the considerable challenge of fostering administrative integration, cultural assimilation, and legislative harmonization of these heterogeneous amalgams, as the historical provinces that composed them were all shaped by different imperial legacies and sociopolitical systems. Not surprisingly, the organization of the two states led to pitched debates among rival factions of the political elite in both countries, who advanced rival institutional "projects" vying for political dominance. Employing Paul Colomy's theoretical framework on institutional change, we can differentiate among three types of political projects in interwar Romania and Yugoslavia: 1) "elaborative," promoting only minor reforms of the existing institutional framework with the aim of rescuing practices that functioned in Serbia or the Old Kingdom of Romania, and thus protecting their traditional interest groups; 2) "reconstructive," arguing for an ample institutional reorganization of the two postwar states leading to the creation of new bureaucratic agencies and roles, in favor of new political interest groups; and 3) "totalizing," working for a radical reorganization of the existing institutional order, either in the form of classical revolutions or of charismatic "ethical prophecies."¹⁵⁵

Romanian political elites of the Old Kingdom, represented mostly by the Liberal Party, promoted an elaborative institutional agenda. Arguing that Greater Romania was not a new state but a continuation of the Old Kingdom, they advocated the extension of that country's prewar legislation to the newly incorporated provinces as a means of unifying the

¹⁵⁴ See Robert J. Donia, *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

¹⁵⁵ Paul Colomy, "Neofunctionalism and Neoinstitutionalism: Human Agency and Interest in Institutional Change," *Sociological Forum*, 13, no. 2 (June 1998), 270.

country. Similarly, the Belgrade-based elites also promoted an elaborate institutional agenda. Although they admitted that the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was a new state, they nevertheless thought that Serbia's tradition of statehood, the Serbian army's heroic fight during the war and the pivotal political role played by the Serbian Karadjordjević dynasty in the making of the new post-war kingdom entitled Serbia to play a core role in the process of interwar state-building. On this basis, they therefore argued for state continuity with prewar Serbian institutions and practices.

In contrast to these dominant views originating from the two political centers, regional elites from the newly joint territories in both countries argued for postwar negotiations of power positions, followed by forms of territorial devolution of the decision-making processes. In Romania, the most powerful proponent of this latter view was the National Party in Transylvania, which, resenting the loss of its monopoly over Transylvania's regional affairs in 1920, fused in 1926 with the Peasant Party of the Old Kingdom to form the National-Peasant Party and successfully challenged the Liberals' political domination. In the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, regional elites in Croatia and Slovenia, but also many voices in Serbia, argued for devolution and extensive local autonomy, eventually leading to the federalization of the country.

In both countries, Romania and Yugoslavia, the views of the center prevailed. In the first postwar decade, political life in Greater Romania was dominated by the National Liberal Party, which imposed its centralizing vision over the country's postwar organization. True, the rule of the National-Peasant Party (1929–1933) brought about an attempt to reorganize Romania in historical provinces. However, this experiment in devolution was short-lived; the NPP ultimately proved to be conciliatory rather than revolutionary. The process of political integration and legislative unification within Greater Romania thus gradually progressed—marked by the adoption of a new constitution (1923), a new citizenship law (1924) and a new civil code (1932)—putting an end to regional legal disparities.

By contrast, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was less successful at regional integration. Due to the centrifugal political options of rival elites, in 1929, at a time when a peaceful transition of power occurred in Romania, from the National-Liberal Party to the National-Peasant Party, political pluralism was curtailed by King Alexander's royal absolutism, supported by a form of integral Yugoslavism "from above." The new constitution, adopted in 1932, proclaimed Yugoslavia a unitary nation-state of the South Slavs, while a new administrative law reorganized the country's

territory into ten *banovinas* rather than into historical provinces. However, unlike in Romania, the Yugoslav elites did not manage to forge a fully unified legal-political system; for instance, no unitary civil code was adopted in the new country. In addition, although the political system was gradually liberalized after 1934, regional grievances finally led to the federalization of the country through the establishment of Croatian Banovina as an autonomous entity following the Cvetković-Maček agreement of August 1939.¹⁵⁶ By that time, however, these concessions of the Belgrade-based elites proved too little too late: invaded by the Axis powers in April 1941, Yugoslavia plunged into a bloody civil war marked by the clash of rival ideological or secessionist nation- and state-building projects. Against these similar political backgrounds, the Legion of the Archangel Michael in Romania and the Ustaša movement in Croatia advanced “totalizing” projects of radical social-political transformation. Although these projects were apparently close to the reconstructive projects proposed by regional elites in both countries (see the regionalist trend for devolution in Romania and the campaign for federalization in Yugoslavia), the two fascist organizations’ agendas were in fact radically anti-systemic, as they aimed at seizing the state by violent means, reconfiguring it along totalitarian lines and forging homogeneous ethnic entities. To attain their goals, both movements targeted ethnic minorities as well as the existing ruling elites. In the case of Romania, the Legionary project was directed against the so-called “high-status” minorities, most notably the Jews and the Hungarians, but also against Romanian political elites, who allegedly betrayed the national cause, thus leading to intraethnic ideological strife as well. For its part, the Ustaša promoted the dismemberment of Yugoslavia and the establishment of an independent Greater Croatia, also encompassing Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The two fascist organizations display an intriguing array of similarities and differences that make for an instructive regional comparison.¹⁵⁷ First,

¹⁵⁶ On the history of Yugoslavism, see Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁵⁷ For a pioneering attempt to compare the Legion and the Ustaša, see Aleksa Djilas, *The Contested Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919–1953* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996). Djilas pointed out the striking similarities between them in terms of ideology and social support (p. 209). For a contrary opinion, arguing that, unlike in the case of the Legion, religion did not play a major role in the Ustaša ideology, see Biondich, *Religion and Nation in Wartime*, 113. For a refutation of Biondich’s thesis, see Rory Yeomans, “Militant Women, Warrior Men and Revolutionary Personae: The New Ustaša Man and Woman in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 83, no. 4 (October 2005), 685–732.

the Legion and the Ustaša were established at similar times, in 1927 and 1929, respectively. Thus they were part of the second wave of postwar radicalization that followed the initial upheaval of the early 1920s. Both movements promoted radical projects of social-political transformation of the state and society in Romania and Yugoslavia, respectively. At the same time, the geopolitical positions of the two movements and their national aspiration were rather different. The Legion radically expressed the nationalist agenda of the ethnic majority in a “victorious” nation that had achieved its own, quasi-complete nation-state and was ready to pursue a national consolidation to achieve the country’s enhanced cultural and ethnic homogeneity. The Ustaša, for its part, expressed the frustrations of part of the Croat elite who resented that fact that the Croat nation was part of a larger political entity and lacked a state of its own, as the nation was allegedly subordinated to, or as it claimed, even “subjugated” by, a hegemonic central power within an unequal political structure. The aims of the two organizations were thus different: the Legionaries argued for the radical *reorganization* of the Romanian nation-state, while the Croat nationalists sought the *establishment* of a distinct Croat nation-state. In its separatist goal of establishing an independent Croat nation-state, the Ustaša more closely resembles the Orhanizatsiya Ukrayins’kykh Natsionalistiv (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, or OUN), active mostly in Poland and the western Soviet Ukraine, or certain radical right-wing groups in Czechoslovakia who militated for the ‘recreation,’ in various forms, of Slovakia and Moravia, such as Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, Rodobrana (Defence of the Fatherland) or the small and short-lived Moravian-based National Fascist Camp. These differences notwithstanding, both organizations, the Legion and the Ustaša, expressed the frustration of subordinated groups against the political elites who dominated the state. Both wanted to capture power through revolutionary, violent means and to build totalitarian and ethnically homogeneous nation-states.

Most importantly, both organizations were animated by fascist ideologies centered on the idea of rebirth and regeneration through ethnic cleansing, resting on a peculiar combination of religion and politics. Furthermore, both built powerful charismatic organizations based on unconditional devotion to an undisputed leader. The Legion grew faster: in less than ten years (1927–1937) it managed to develop an original, homegrown ideology and to forge its full-fledged political religion. When it started, the Ustaša resembled a terrorist movement of national secession, similar in scope to the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO) (with which the Ustaša leaders closely cooperated starting in the early

1920s). However, during the mid to late 1930s it evolved toward fascism through a process of internal ideological “maturation” stimulated by external inputs from Fascist Italy and later from Nazi Germany.

Both movements openly worked against the existing political order and employed terrorist methods to destabilize it. Their most notable actions were the assassination of Romania’s prime minister, I.G. Duca, at Sinaia in 1933 and of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia at Marseilles in 1934, respectively (in cooperation with IMRO). In view of their violent nature and anti-democratic orientations, both organizations were outlawed several times and harshly repressed by the authorities. Although it was banned in 1929, 1932, 1933 and 1938, the Legion was revived each time under a different name and succeeded in building a large body of fanatical followers, receiving 16 percent of the vote in the 1937 parliamentary elections. If the Legion managed to find a political niche in Romania’s pluralistic but unconsolidated political order, the Ustaša did not find much room for growth in Yugoslavia’s royal authoritarian regime. For much of its history, from 1929 to 1940, the Ustaša was outlawed and consequently reduced to conspiratorial cells acting abroad, without a significant mass base in Croatian territory. Consequently, in the pre-power stage, the Ustaša’s membership grew rather slowly, from an estimated few thousand in 1930 to about 30,000 to 40,000 in 1939;¹⁵⁸ significant inroads in the Croatian society were made mostly in the period 1939–1941. Before taking power, the Legion can thus be characterized as a mass movement, while the Ustaša could be described at its origins as an ethnic-separatist terrorist organization.

The last stages in the development of the two movements were strikingly different, as their fortunes were reversed. Severely repressed by King Carol in 1938–1939, the Legion was revived in 1940 but was not able to build its own totalitarian political regime, as it was forced to share power with General Ion Antonescu. In late January 1941, following a lethal clash with the army, the Legion was ousted from the political scene by Antonescu. For its part, the Ustaša came to power in 1941 under German and Italian patronage and managed to establish a longer-lasting regime (1941–1945) in the Independent State of Croatia. True, the Ustaša ruled during a constant state of war and operated in a regime that was under heavy foreign domination. But the Ustaša leadership was nevertheless largely able to implement its agenda of institutional organization of the new state, accompanied by a radical transformation of the social and ethnic outlook of Croatian society.

¹⁵⁸ See Payne, *A History of Fascism*, 420.

The following section attempts to deconstruct these ideologies of national salvation and to reveal their main sources. My main aim is not to simply expose their irrational nature but to also uncover their intellectual genealogy and the internal logic of their political religions on the one hand, and to account for the way they shaped the two movements' symbolism, organization and ritual practice on the other.

*II.2. Nationalism as a Political Religion:
Authenticity, Community and Homeland*

The Legion and the Ustaša developed their own political religions founded on a charismatic type of legitimacy and on a number of rites and rituals associated with it. The "holy character" claimed by both organizations had three main ideological sources: the sacralized nation, its history and its territory; the charismatic leader's divine mission; and the martyrdom of the movements' members forged in violent combat. The Legionary ideology was more mystical and overtly religious; by comparison, Ustaša ideology appears less elaborated, and its political actions more pragmatic.

The core dimension of these political religions was the cult of authenticity. Expressed in many forms, this cult rested mainly on the idea of the existence of a predestined communion between the given nation and its national homeland. A primary component of the cult of authenticity was thus the cult of the ancestral land of the nation, an expression of the phenomenon of the territorialization of nationalism. Both movements advanced their own views on the ideal territorial and ethnic borders of the nation, by claiming historical rights over a certain territory and declaring it an indivisible entity. In the Romanian case, the ancestral land was presented as the cradle of the ethnogenesis and Christianization of the Romanian people; Legionary propaganda emphasized the continuity of the Romanian people on the same territory, without interruption. In the Croat case, the historical homeland was not the land of ethnogenesis but the "conquered land" or the land of "destination," which became the promised land of the nation.

The cult of the ancestral land was an attempt to re-root the national community in time and space, by presenting its habitat as the land of history and destiny of the chosen people. This attempt was expressed in two ways: The first one was to develop a form of ethno-nature, by asserting the nation's right over a "predestined" and thus well-differentiated national homeland, bordered by rivers, mountains, sea and other natural demarcations, thus in effect ethnicizing and consequently appropriating that habitat. The second one was the "naturalization" of historical landmarks

of the nation, presenting them as part of the natural setting of the respective community.¹⁵⁹ In the case of the Legion, the sacralization of the land was done mostly through the veneration of the ancestors' graves; in the Ustaša's case, it was through the cult of the peasantry and its "organic" link to the land.

II.2.1. "A Unique Nation": *The Principles of the Ustaša Movement*

We acknowledge only one name: Croat, and one country: Croatia.

The Croatian name has...grown together with the soul of the entire nation.¹⁶⁰

The Ustaša's vision of the Croat nation is best encapsulated in *Ustaško-domobranska načela* (The Ustaša-Home-Defender Principles), an ethical code of conduct authored and published by Ante Pavelić for the first time in 1933,¹⁶¹ and republished, in an expanded form, in 1942.¹⁶² Hailed as a body of mystical, sacred precepts of the Ustaša, the document was essentially a nationalist charter, affirming the Croats' distinct national existence and defining the basic elements of their collective identity: their name, their homeland, their eternal unity, their right to freedom and self-determination and, in the 1942 version, the main organizational tenets of the new totalitarian state in the making. The Principles were defined as

¹⁵⁹ For these two strategies, closely linked with the cult of authenticity, see Smith, *Chosen People*, 134–137.

¹⁶⁰ Danijel Crljen, ed., *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta* (Zagreb: Tiskara Matice hrvatskih akademikara, 1942), 32. Unless otherwise attributed expressly or by way of citations, translations from Croatian into English are by Goran Miljan, doctoral student in the History Department, CEU, working on a dissertation on the history of the Ustaša, as part of his contribution to the research project *Fascism in East-Central Europe: A Documentary Reader*, which I coordinate. I have tacitly edited these translations whenever necessary.

¹⁶¹ The first edition of *The Ustaša-Home-Defender Principles* is not dated. Some sources date it back to the establishment of the movement in 1929, but the second (1942) edition states it was first published in 1933. See "The Principles of the Ustase Movement," private collection, trans. Siniša Djurić, <http://www.pavelićpapers.hr>.

¹⁶² Danijel Crljen, ed., *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta*, 117. Compared to the 1933 original edition, the reworked 1942 *Principles* also included an introduction, a short preamble titled "Poglavnikova duša," and three new articles: Principle 8 on the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia; Principle 14, titled "The Nobility of Work and Duty;" and Principle 15, "The Principle of Responsibility." At the same time, Principle 12 from the 1933 edition, which affirmed that the Croatian people belong to Western culture and civilization, did not appear in the 1942 edition, while Principle 15 was divided into two Principles, 16 and 17, titled "Sources of Croatian Strength and Progress" and "Tasks of National Work," respectively. I thank Goran Miljan for drawing my attention to these differences.

"the mental core of the Ustaša movement," meant to provide "guidance to the entire national and individual life and work;" they were also presented as "the basic law on which our young state shall be established and developed."¹⁶³

In the spirit of the political religion of nationalism, the Ustaša Principles proclaimed the Croatian people as "an independent ethnic and national unit" (Principle 1). They asserted the unique ethnic and national character of the Croats, defining them as "a nation by itself, ... not identical with any other nation nor a part or a tribe of any other nation" (Principle 1). Principle 2 established the distinct historical name of the Croatian people, that of *Hrvat* (Croat), stating: "The name cannot and must not be replaced by any other name." An additional paragraph added in 1942 reinforced the organic link between the people and its name, claiming, "The Croatian name has thus grown together with the soul of the entire nation."¹⁶⁴ Principles 2–5 also proclaimed the inalienable borders and historical name of the national homeland of Croatia: the cult of authenticity was unambiguously manifested in the claim that the "present homeland" was permanently conquered "1,300 years ago" (Principle 2, 1933), "1,400 years ago" (Principle 2, 1942) or "in ancient times" (Principle 3): "The Croatian people came to their homeland of Croatia as a completely free nation in the time of the Great Migrations, by their own will, thus conquering that land and *making it their own forever*" (Principle 5, emphasis added).

That long-term habitation led to an organic link between the Croatian people and its homeland: "They inhabited it, grew with it and gave it the authentic and natural name Croatia" (Principle 3). A 1942 addition to Principle 4 delineated the Ustaša's vision on the ideal ethnic-historical borders of Croatia: "The Croatian coast is washed by the Adriatic in both Dubrovnik and Crikvenica. A Croatian peasant works the fertile fields of Posavina, cuts down the forests of Velebit, treads through the gorges of Mosor, and protects the border on the Drina. Croatian rivers are the Zrmanja and the Sava, the Bosna and the Neretva. The Croatian spirit can be perceived from times immemorial in Varaždin and Senj, Sarajevo and Mostar, Osijek and Makarska."¹⁶⁵ The same principle also established the indivisible unity of the Croatian homeland, arguing that, despite the

¹⁶³ Crljen, ed., *Načela hrvatskog Ustaškog pokreta*, 32.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

distinct names of the various historical provinces, "all these provinces form a unique homeland, Croatia, and no one has the right to claim any of the provinces" (Principle 4).

The Principles abound in religious references to the messianic mission of the Croats as the chosen people: see Principle 11, titled "God and the Croats," as well as the assertion that "only a peasant can fulfill this organic connection between the people and the land, with his unlimited love for hills and valleys, *forever bounded by Providence*."¹⁶⁶

The Ustaša ideology promoted a new mythological version of the collective origin of the Croatians, their history and "mission." The Principles claimed that the Croats were not of Slavic origin but a distinct *ethnie* with a specific historical mission. Croats were "a free warrior people" who came from the Caucasus and the Visla basin, conquered their national homeland and established their own state. They were not part of the Slavic group, even if they subjugated Slavs along the way. As part of this process of living together, "the Croats assumed certain Slavic characteristics, such as the language and certain customs." Yet the Croats were not Slavic but a distinct ruling class superimposed on the Slavs: "the yeast that gave the spiritual ingredient," the idea of freedom and statehood, to the "Slavic masses."¹⁶⁷ Principle 6 claimed that, since the very beginning of their history, the "Croat nation" had a complete organization in military as well as family affairs, "so that it immediately founded its own state with all of the attributes of statehood." Pursuing this logic, Principle 7 claimed the Croatian state had an uninterrupted continuity until World War I, when "foreign forces prevented the Croatian people from exercising their sovereign right to form their own CROATIAN STATE." On this basis, Principles 8, 10 and 11 asserted, in a repetitive manner, the Croats' legitimate right "to reconstitute a complete, sovereign and independent Croatian state," using "any means, including force of arms" (Principle 8). These claims were meant to justify the Ustaša's violence and terrorism against the federal structure of interwar Yugoslavia, by portraying Belgrade's domination over Croatia as illegitimate and foreign to the Croats' history and traditions. After the document had declared the Croat people to be a distinct, self-governing entity, Principle 9 asserted the Croats' legitimate sovereign right to "happiness and prosperity."

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 33–34.

The Ustaša Principles contained general remarks on the intended internal organization of the Croatian society or of the (future) Ustaša-led state. In a corporatist spirit, the Ustaša promoted a patriarchal organization of society, based on the harmony of all classes but excluding all foreign elements. "All classes of the Croatian people constitute one national unit." Its basic tenets were communal life based on an "orderly and religious family"; on agriculture and the exploitation of the natural wealth of the Croatian land; on educational and cultural progress, promoted through science and learning; and on craftsmanship, as complementary to agriculture (Principle 16).

Membership in the Croatian nation was defined on an ethnic-racial as well as political-ideological basis. It was open to individuals of "Croatian blood, who can trace back their origins" but who also "maintain a permanent familial connection with the village and the land" (Principle 14). The Croat nation-state was consequently to be organized as an racial-ethnic polity, so that "no one can make decisions who is *not by origin and by blood* a member of Croatian nation" (Principle 11). In 1942 the ethnic-racial character of the NDH was reinforced by the eugenic nature of Principle 17, which asserted that, in order to guarantee the survival, prosperity and security of the Croatian state, authorities had to assure a "balanced breeding" of the nation through the "promotion and perfection of . . . virtues and branches of national life."

Apart from the idea of ethnic purity, the cult of authenticity was first and foremost expressed by the primordial role assigned to the peasantry in defining the Croat nation, regarded as "the foundation and source of life" and consequently "bearer and agent of all state authority in Croatian state" (Principle 13). Since the peasantry was the only repository of the Croat nation—"it alone constitutes the Croatian nation"—those who were not members of the peasant community were in fact alien to the Croat nation: "In ninety-nine out of a hundred cases someone in Croatia who does not originate from a peasant family is not a Croat at all, but a *foreign immigrant*" (Principle 14). The sovereignty of the people was also expressed in its inalienable right of possession over all the country's land and natural resources (Principle 13). The Principles did not abolish private property but nevertheless rejected "the harmful principle of unlimited ownership."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 79.

The Croat people was naturally to be led by the Ustaša, as the country's only leading force. The Ustaša called for the new state's politics to be organized on a totalitarian basis, based on duties, responsibilities and unconditional devotion to its charismatic leader. The character of the totalitarian state is established in several paragraphs reminiscent of Mussolini's 1932 essay, "The Doctrine of Fascism":

The Independent State of Croatia is totalitarian because it integrates, connects and manages all sources of national strength, both spiritual and materialistic, because it assumes a complete, total care for all national strata in all their lives' needs. It is totalitarian because it strives to monitor everything, to guide, manage, and arrange everything. It is totalitarian because it makes an equal effort to ensure that a child can go to school, that a peasant can get seeds, that a mother can give birth without worry, that a worker can have a safe job, that an old man can spend his last days in peace. It is totalitarian because it strives to put the life and work of each individual in the service of common national benefit.¹⁶⁹

Finally, Principle 12 of the 1933 version adhered to an "Occidentalism" symbolic geography, stating unambiguously that "The Croatian nation belongs to Western culture and to Western civilization." Most obviously, this claim was implicitly meant to further distance the Croats from the "Orthodox" Serbs, who were thus relegated to the Balkans, an attitude that can aptly be described as a form of "nesting Orientalism."¹⁷⁰ In view of the Nazis' "New European Order" that reigned over wartime Europe, this reference to Western civilization was removed from the 1942 version of the Principles. Moreover, while repeatedly affirming the Croats' inalienable right to sovereignty and independence, the 1942 Principles obscured the NDH's effective control by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy and its substantial territorial amputation.

II.2.2. *The Legionary Palingenetic Project: Salvation and the Cult of the Ancestors*

The Legion of the Archangel Michael was created in June 1927 by a nucleus of activists led by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu and Ion I. Moța (1902–1937) as an "elite" organization of radical young nationalists. Its roots were in the anti-Semitic student movements that took place in major Romanian

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 113.

¹⁷⁰ On this concept see Milica Bakić-Hayden, "Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia," *Slavic Review* 54, no. 4 (1995), 917–931.

universities in the immediate postwar period (1920–1922). In 1923, while student activism was fading away, a nucleus of radical students broke with the more moderate student leaders, who tended to focus instead on specific student grievances, and planned to continue the national student fight “within a general nationalist political movement aimed at seizing political power.”¹⁷¹

This nucleus of activists originated from three main regional universities: Cluj in Transylvania, Iași in northern Moldavia, and Cernăuți/Cernowitz in Bukovina. These (in majority newly annexed) multiethnic regions were sites of interethnic confrontations in the cultural or social-political fields. Romanian nationalists resented the fact that, from their point of view, the new Romanian order was still “unconsolidated,” in the sense that, while ethnic Romanians came to populate the country’s administrative apparatus, members of ethnic minorities continued to dominate major social-cultural institutions, especially visible in cities. Interethnic tensions were particularly high in universities, where members of various ethnic groups interacted on a daily basis and also displayed a high degree of political mobilization. Conflicts arose not only over the issues of the fairness of resource allocation, but also over the “proportional” admittance to university of students from the country’s various ethnic groups. At a time when universities were perceived as laboratories for forging the country’s new would-be elite, young Romanian nationalists demanded the implementation of *numerous clausus* policies in universities, to assure their numerical domination of the student body and thus curb the competition for social mobility from the more urban and thus in their view “privileged” or “high-status” ethnic minorities.

Forged by their activism in the postwar student movements, the radical nucleus of activists transferred their radical spirit to politics, including their determination to employ violent means to reach their goals. The “anti-Jewish” plot planned by the group in 1923 primarily at Moța’s instigation, with the aim of assassinating major Jewish industrialists and a number of Romanian politicians, “was the first manifestation of the great break”¹⁷² with the less radical prewar type of nationalism. Although uncovered by authorities, the plot was instrumental in crystallizing the new violent political ethos of the radical group of activists. The group’s

¹⁷¹ Ion Moța, “Legiunea și L.A.N.C.,” in Ion I. Moța, *Cranii de Lemn. Articole, 1922–1936* (Sibiu: Totul Pentru Țară, 1936), 117.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 115.

experience of common detention in the Văcărești monastery strengthened its collective bonds. The activists were subsequently referred to as “the Văcăreșteni” (after the name of their detention place). In 1923, the group joined the newly formed League of Nation-Christian Defense (LNCD), an anti-Semitic organization based mostly in Bukovina, Northern Moldova, Maramureș and Central Transylvania, and led by A.C. Cuza, Professor at the University of Iași. Codreanu and his associated played an important role in organizing the LNCD’s youth branch. Growing increasingly dissatisfied with Cuza’s moderate and self-centered style of command, in 1927 the radical nucleus of activists left the LNCD and established the Legion of the Archangel Michael. This new “disciplined, authoritarian, anti-democratic organization,” aimed at capturing the spirit of the postwar student revolts and at transforming it into a movement of national revolution of those determined to walk on “the path of national honor and of sacrifice for the Nation and Christ.”¹⁷³

Unlike traditional political parties, the Legion originally had no defined political program, presenting itself as a character-building educational movement. Thus, instead of pursuing a concrete plan of action, the organization defined as its goal the salvation of the Romanian nation, under Codreanu’s charismatic leadership and through the sacrifice of the Legionaries as the “recipients of the saving force.”¹⁷⁴ According to the Legionaries, the new movement was first animated by a “state of mind” or a credo; later, that credo was elaborated into a comprehensive doctrine in the writings of the main ideologues of the movement. This doctrine was not static or fixed, but a dynamic, evolving body of precepts. The backbone of the Legionary doctrine consisted of the teachings of the main ideologues of the movement, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, “the Founder of the Legion,” and Ion I. Moța, “his closest collaborator.” To these there were other contributions, most notably by the intellectuals belonging to the *Axa* intellectual group who joined the group in 1932, such as Vasile Marin, Mihail Polihroniade, Vasile Christescu and Puiu Garniceanu, as well as other prominent leaders such as Ion Banea, Ilie Imbrescu and Constantin Papanace, during the 1920s and 1930s or even in the post-1940 period.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Moța, *Cranii de Lemn*, 53.

¹⁷⁵ In a work published as late as 1980 and pointedly entitled *Doctrina Legionară* (Madrid: Editura Mișcării Legionare, 1980), Horia Sima attempts to systematize the Legionary ideology. Obviously reacting to the academic literature on fascism and the Iron Guard, Horia Sima downplayed the “anti-” character of the Legionary ideology (anti-liberal, anti-Semitic, etc.) as accidental and not representative. Instead, he underscores the “positive”

The Legionary doctrine was not based on reason: it claimed a "revealed" nature, stemming from the Gospel, but also rooted in the Romanian people's "genius," history and soil. The Legion put forward a charismatic scenario of divine salvation based on the behavioral model of *imitatio Christi*. In this divine scenario that, in their view, proceeded according to God's will, angels were intermediary and assisting forces of salvation; the Romanian nation was the elect nation, able to bring about the salvation of humanity; Codreanu was the charismatic leader; and Legionaries were the martyrs of the new creed. This scenario had all the elements of traditional apocalyptic politics but adapted them to the Romanian and European contexts. Legionaries consciously emulated the behavioral model of Christian crusaders, especially of Crusader military orders. They saw themselves as an earthly army bearing divine revelation, who guided the nations under the direction of the charismatic leader and alongside the heavenly army of God's angels against Satan and his harmful actions; the Romanian people and humanity as the recipients; Jews, portrayed as demons, and the Bolsheviks were the enemies; and Romanian politicians and the main Orthodox Church leaders were the Judas and the traitors. The Legionaries' ultimate stated goals were the redemption of the people through forging the new man; the creation of a totalitarian state in Romania as part of a new international order dominated by new chosen people; and the end of history through the resurrection and salvation of humanity. Within this broad scheme, Codreanu, Moța, Cantacuzino and leading members of the *Axa* group articulated complementary or at times even divergent visions on the unfolding of this gigantic and highly complex charismatic scenario of salvation.

II.2.3 *Regeneration as Christian Salvation*

In the spirit of Romantic palingenesis, Legionary regeneration was to occur in the form of Christian salvation. Various theologies differ on how Christian salvation is to be obtained: from above, by action of divine grace alone; as a combined action of God and man; or as the action of man alone, without the assistance of divinity. In Legionary eschatology, salvation was the result of a struggle of God's "chosen warriors" against Satan and the

or creative features of the Legionary doctrine. His main goal was to provide a doctrinarian synthesis meant to give a "unitary structure" to the heterogeneous body of Legionary works (p. 3). But he also planned to arrive at "a more developed Legionary doctrine" (p. 7) by providing "new material" (p. 2). Sima credits Codreanu, "the Founder of the Legion," and Moța, "his closest collaborator," with being the main ideologues of the movement.

infidels. Although the chosen ones enjoyed the assistance of God, through the support and guidance of the Archangel Michael, his highest messenger and minister, salvation was neither automatic nor inevitable. It was to be the result of a gigantic struggle, a heroic crusade against materialism and atheism. Legionaries were uncertain whether they would actually be saved: "What has to torment our soul in every moment is if the Romanian salvation will eventually occur."¹⁷⁶ The Legionary eschatology was animated by the fear of degeneration and the vision of an imminent national danger, making the action of the charismatic leader not only urgent but also indispensable. Legionaries saw themselves as bearers of divine revelation, who, as an earthly army, guided the nations in the fight against decadence alongside the heavenly army of God's angels against Satan. The scene of this apocalyptic battle was Romanian society and, by extension, interwar Europe (most notably, Russia and Spain). The final scope of the struggle for salvation was the end of history, the resurrection and redemption of the nation and of humanity. The means to salvation was the creation of the totalitarian state and its corollary, the new Legionary man, and the establishment of a new international order.

Centered on the devotional model of *imitatio Christi*, the charismatic scenario of divine salvation elaborated by the Legion had the following main components: 1) faith in an omnipotent but benevolent God who harbored divine plans for election and salvation; 2) the belief in the Romanian nation as the elect nation, able to bring about the salvation and redemption of the mankind; 3) the belief in the Archangel Michael as the guardian angel of the elect nation; 4) Codreanu as the predestined charismatic leader leading the way to salvation through *imitatio Christi*; 5) the Legionaries as God's chosen warriors and martyrs of the struggle for national salvation; and 6) the Romanian people—past and present—and humanity, in general, as the recipients of salvation.

The essence of the Legionary ideology was a kenotic vision of palingenesis centered on the idea of regeneration through sacrifice, following the model of *imitatio Christi*. To this core other components of Romantic theories of palingenesis were associated, such as Christian eschatology, metempsychosis, and the idea of ecumenical redemption of mankind, the predestination and divine mission of the Romanian people, and heroic Christianity through the expiation of sins and martyrdom.

¹⁷⁶ Cantacuzino, *Românul de mâine* (1937), in *Opere complete*, 31.

First and foremost, the Legionary charismatic scenario of divine salvation was founded on the belief in the existence of a just and benevolent God who allows for the happiness and salvation of all peoples. Faith in God was one of the four supreme guiding principles of the movement as defined by Codreanu: "We [the founders of the movement] all believed in God. Not one of us was an atheist. The more we were alone and surrounded, the more our concerns were directed toward God and toward contact with our dead and the dead of the nation. This gave us an invincible strength and a luminous serenity in the face of all blows."¹⁷⁷

Second, the Legion saw Christian salvation as the ultimate end of history, entailing "the resurrection of people from the dead" and the people's holiness and communion with God as the apotheosis of human collectivities. In line with Romantic visions of nationalism, the main actors and subjects of redemption were not individuals but nations. In the spirit of the universal ecumenism that characterized the European Romantic Evangelical revival, salvation was granted to all peoples of the world:

The final aim is not life but resurrection. The resurrection of peoples in the name of the Saviour Jesus Christ... There will come a time when all the peoples of the earth shall be resurrected, with all their dead and all their kings and emperors, each people having its place before God's throne. The final moment, "the resurrection from the dead," is the noblest and most sublime one toward which a people can rise.¹⁷⁸

Codreanu envisioned the people as an entity "whose life continues beyond earth." In doing so, he articulated ideas about metempsychosis, namely the belief that the soul is an independent and immortal entity that passes from the body to an inanimate state. Ideas about metempsychosis as a form of collective solidarity and redemption were widespread during Romanticism. However, while the Romantics spoke about the universal redemption of mankind, the Legion believed in the redemption and rebirth of the nation as an organic entity. Connected with the understanding of the nation as a community of kin, this belief claims that individual souls come together into a unified, collective spiritual consciousness. In Codreanu's view, the nation was composed of three main elements: "1. A physical and biological patrimony: her flesh and blood; 2. A material

¹⁷⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, vol. 1 (Sibiu: "Totul pentru țară," 1936), 425. English translation: *For My Legionaries* (The Iron Guard) (York, SC: Liberty Bell Publications, 2003) (here 315).

¹⁷⁸ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 302.

patrimony: the soil of her country and its riches; 3. A spiritual patrimony.”¹⁷⁹ The nation’s spiritual patrimony was made up of “her concept of God, the world and life,” “her honor,” and her culture, regarded as “the expression of national genius, of the blood.”¹⁸⁰ For Codreanu, the “national community” referred not only to the community of interwar ethnic Romanians, but to all past, present and future generations:

When we say the Romanian nation, we mean not only all Romanians living in the same territory, sharing the same past and the same future, the same dress, but all Romanians, living and dead, who have lived on this land from the beginning of history and who will live here also in the future. The nation includes: 1. All the Romanians alive today; 2. All the souls of our dead and the tombs of our ancestors; 3. All those who will be born Romanians.¹⁸¹

These heterogeneous streams of thought were amalgamated into a new national doctrine of salvation and expressed in innovative forms of ritual practice.

II.2.4 *The Main Axes of the Legionary Ideology: The Earthly and the Divine*

In order to assure the salvation of the nation as an organic physical, material and spiritual entity, the Legionary ideology and ritual practice encompassed two main axes originating from the process of sacralizing politics initiated in the mid-nineteenth century in the Old Kingdom: the cult of the Archangel Michael and the cult of the ancestral land. The first axis conferred on the Legionary ideology a transcendental dimension, linking it to the holy or the sacred. The Archangel Michael became the main source of the Legion’s ideology and symbolism and the object of a fanatical Legionary cult; Michael’s feast day on November 8 was proclaimed the official celebration of the movement. A large copy of the icon that allegedly inspired his vision was proclaimed the sacred relic of the Legion and was permanently guarded by a Legionary team in the main headquarters of the movement in Iași. The icon was also reproduced on the cover of the Legion’s official magazine; additional copies were dispersed to territorial organizations, while a miniature was worn by Codreanu himself. This led to a Legionary cult of the icon of the Archangel Michael as a symbol of divine revelation and protection: “Our Patron Saint is the Archangel

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 424.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 423.

Michael. We ought to have his icon in our homes, and in difficult times we should ask his help and he will never fail us.”¹⁸²

The second ideological axis gave the Legion an “earthly” dimension, linking it to the cult of the ancestors and of the martyrs. Codreanu claimed that, according to a “God-given law,” the land was the nation’s basis for existence.¹⁸³ The cult of the ancestral land inspired the name of the movement’s official magazine, *Pământul strămoșesc* (The Ancestral Land), and was organically linked with funeral rites and rituals.

In the Legionary view, the national territory was symbolically marked by the graves of the Romanian national heroes: in Codreanu’s words, “We are bound to this land by millions of graves.” The areas inhabited by ethnic minorities were regarded as invaded territories, in violation of God’s laws. The territorialization of nationalism was also made evident by the fact that the cover of the magazine reproduced, under the icon of the Archangel, a map of Greater Romania; the urban enclaves inhabited by non-Romanians (mainly Jews) were marked with black spots as “gangrenous” parts of the nation’s ancestral land (see Picture 1 and its caption). Together, the two vertical and horizontal axes of the Legionary ideology united, in a powerful symbolism, the earthly and the divine: “Here we are with the borders of our movements firmly fixed: With one side rooted in our ancestral land, and with the other in the sky: the Archangel Michael and *The Ancestral Land*.” The two axes were an expression of the Legion’s historicism, with roots in Romantic palingenetic historical ideology: they were meant to unite the pre-Christian (Dacian) roots of the Romanian people, with its Christianity and manifest destiny leading to redemption and salvation.

The founding ceremony of the Legion is representative of the manner in which the movement’s main ideological axes shaped the ritual practice. The ceremony took place on November 8, 1927, the holiday of Archangels Michael and Gabriel. The main event of the day was the oath-taking ceremony and the awarding of leather bags containing earth samples from sites of memories connected with the “national” history of the Romanians, from the second war between the Romans and the Dacians (105–106 CE) to World War I. The events selected, referring to glorious victories, tragic defeats or martyrdom for the “national cause,” are representative of the Legionaries’ historical viewpoint. The most important samples originated

¹⁸² Ibid., 340.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 92.



Pictures 1–2: The cover of the official journal of the Legion, *Pământul Strămoșesc* (The Fatherland), and the depiction of Archangel Michael on the door of the shrine in the Cathedral of the Union in Alba Iulia (picture by Constantin Iordachi). The cover illustrates, in a nutshell, the main aspects of Legionary ideology. In the center of the picture is the venerated icon of Saint Michael. Above it is a swastika, which was used in the iconography of the anti-Semitic radical Right in Romania since before World War I and was adopted by the Legion as well. Underneath is a map of Greater Romania indicating major Romanian cities; the black spots show the proportion of Jews to the total population of each city, in an attempt to document the alleged “Jewish invasion” of Greater Romania. On the right side of the picture runs a quotation from the Bible attributed to Saint Michael: “I mercilessly direct my sword toward the filthy hearts who come into the immaculate house of God.” This quotation is taken from a depiction of Archangel Michael in the Cathedral of the Union in Alba Iulia (see Picture 2 on the right). This depiction was venerated by the Legionaries as the “icon” or symbol of national unification, and this explains why the Legionaries alluded to it on the cover of their main journal. On the left side is a quotation from the Romanian poet George Coșbuc, glorifying sacrifice: “Gods if we were descending from / We would still be mortal / It makes no difference if you die / Young men or hunch-backed old / But it is not the same to die / A lion or a chained slave.”

from the grave of Michael the Brave in Turda (1601) and the battleground of Războieni, where Stephen the Great lost 10,000 soldiers fighting the Ottomans (1476). To these, the Legionaries added, following a chronological order, earth from Costești, the first fort conquered by the Roman army during its siege of Sarmisegetuza, the capital of the Dacian kingdom (106); the battleground of Călugăreni, where Michael the Brave achieved his greatest military victory against the Ottomans (1595); Podul Înalt, where Stephen the Great won an impressive victory against the Ottomans (1475); the Moldovan medieval fortresses of Suceava, Neamț, Soroca and Hotin; from Roșcani, commemorating the martyrdom of the Wallachian prince Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit. In Transylvania, samples were taken from Alba Iulia, in memory of the martyrdom of Horea, leader of the 1784 peasant uprising, and the grave of Avram Iancu, leader of the Transylvanian Romanians in the 1848–1849 revolution. A third set of samples originated from the battlegrounds of the Romanian army during World War I, commemorating the defeat of the Romanian army in Turtucaia (Dobrudja); its heroic resistance on the Jiu River; the victories of Mărăști, Mărășești and Oituz; and the bloody fights of Cașin.

Earth samples were accompanied by “certificates of authenticity” issued by the emissaries sent to these sites of memory. Their letters were published by Codreanu in *For My Legionaries*, together with descriptions of the historical events they evoked, taken from a secondary-school history textbook.¹⁸⁴ The earth sample was placed on a white tablecloth and mixed by two Legionaries in a highly solemn ceremony, during which participants saluted the flag of the Legion and sang its hymn, seen as the Romanian people’s cry of desperation and appeal to bravery. According to Codreanu’s recollection, the highly “elevating and emotional” ceremony symbolically linked the Legion with the “two-thousand-year-long” history of the Romanian people.

Each participant took an oath of allegiance to the Legion and received a leather sack. The leather sack was conceived as a “holy talisman” for the Legionaries, inspiring their heroism: “Let it be so that, by wearing at our heart the talisman of the holy earth of the ancestral land, we extract from it the heroic blood and spill it into our own veins.”¹⁸⁵ The oath bound

¹⁸⁴ Ion S. Floru, *Istoria românilor pentru cursul superior de liceu* (Bucharest: Socec, 1924). See also Ion S. Floru, *Istoria Românilor pentru cursul superior* (Bucharest: Socec, 1928).

¹⁸⁵ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Cânticula șefului de cuib* (Bucharest: “Bucovina” I. B. Torouțiu, 1940), 94. 1st ed.: (Bucharest, 1933); for an English translation, see *Legion: The Nest Leaders Manual* (London: The Rising Press, 1984).

participants to unconditional and perpetual allegiance to the nation and the Legion. They committed themselves to fight ceaselessly for “defending, cleansing and liberating the ancestral land” from Jewish domination. Thus, although the Legion claimed a form of “defensive” nationalism, its program was highly and militantly xenophobic and anti-Semitic; its slogan was “Romania for the Romanians.”

II.3. *Charismatic Nationalism and the Cult of the Leader: The Poglavnik and the Captain in Comparison*

The main ideological axis of the Ustaša and the Legionary movement was the charismatic cult of their leaders, Ante Pavelić (July 14, 1889–December 28, 1959) and Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (September 13, 1899–November 30, 1938), respectively. The biography of the two men exhibited certain similarities, within the larger gallery of the radical interwar leaders of common origin that emerged in the era of mass politics. Both leaders were born in contested borderland provinces: Pavelić in Bradina, a small village in the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia-Herzegovina, in a Croat Catholic family; and Codreanu in Iași, northern Moldavia, from an Orthodox Romanian father and a Catholic German mother who emigrated there from the Austro-Hungarian province of Galicia. Both leaders studied law at the University of Zabreb and at the University of Iași, respectively. Both were active in national movements during their student years and emerged as troublesome figures, due to their uncompromising nature, their anti-establishment stance and their determination to use violence in their political struggle. Codreanu was more of a mystically inclined figure, while Pavelić appeared to be a more pragmatic man of action. Both leaders ran in national elections and episodically represented their organizations in Parliament yet did not feel at ease in that pluralist political forum. Pavelić, however, was more versed in functioning in political bureaucratic party-structures than Codreanu and, being 10 years older, had also a more extensive political experience accumulated since the early 1920s. Distancing themselves from the traditional and thus more conservative Right, both men created alternative, ultra-nationalist paramilitary organizations. Both assumed the leadership of their movement from the very beginning and took on unofficial military-like titles: Pavelić became the Poglavnik (Head Man or Leader) and Codreanu proclaimed himself Căpitan (Captain). These were meant to confer on them a legendary authority and an aura of bravery and heroism.

Both leaders asserted claims to a divine mission and became the objects of fanatic charismatic cults, acquiring the auras of infallible leaders. Both

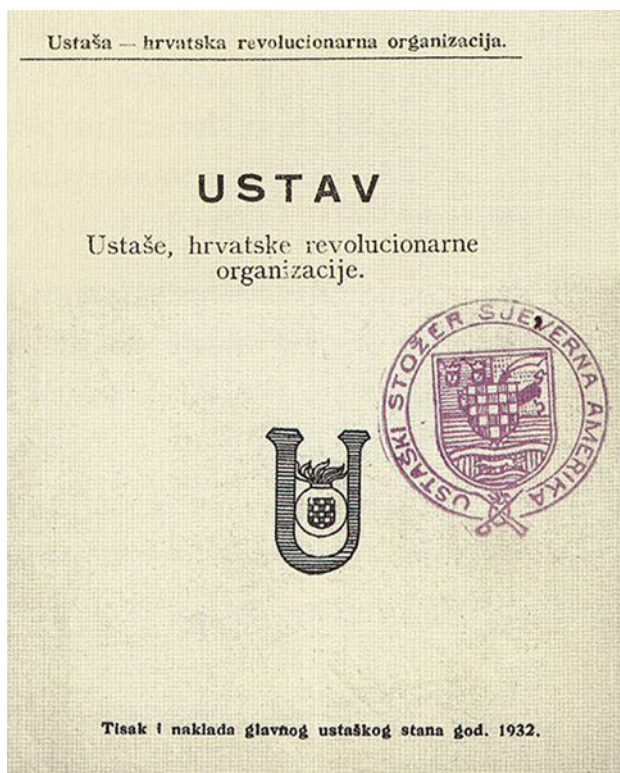
wrote political treaties and autobiographies stressing their own charismatic qualities. In addition, they authored salvational guidebooks aimed at structuring their movements, at providing education role models for the followers and at establishing distinct ethical codes of behavior.

Their charismatic cults, however, exhibit major differences. First and foremost, in his lifetime, Codreanu never assumed a position of power in the state apparatus, yet he nevertheless succeeded in building a nucleus of faithful voluntary followers and becoming the object of a fanatical cult of personality during the Legion's pre-power stage. Although Codreanu was arrested several times and served prison sentences, his charismatic cult developed openly, fueled by his followers but also by an extensive press propaganda. In the 1930s, his cult grew in importance, becoming a main vehicle of the Legion's ideology and accounting for its proselytizing power. State repression and political controversy served Codreanu well, but it also proved fatal: the Legion's leader was assassinated in 1938 at King Carol II's orders. Remarkably, Codreanu's charismatic cult survived his death, continuing to provide the main ideological and ritual axis of the movement. The Legion thus exhibits a rare case of a successful routinization of the charisma of a dead leader.

For his part, after King Alexander established his dictatorial regime in 1929, Ante Pavelić was active mostly abroad; moreover, after the king's assassination in 1934, Pavelić's freedom of movement was restricted by Italian authorities. Consequently, his claims to charismatic authority did not pass the test of mass validation, beyond his circle of immediate followers and the paramilitary movement they managed to assemble on Italian soil. It was only in the NDH that Pavelić became the subject of a state-sponsored charismatic cult, aggressively disseminated in multiple forms by the official propaganda in all major state institutions, most notably the party, the school and the army. Finally, unlike Codreanu, Pavelić survived the end of the NDH regime. Emigrating abroad, he continued to coordinate postwar Ustaša circles and expanded on his self-justifying autobiographical accounts.

II.3.1. *Pavelić's Charisma, Party Organization and Totalitarian Control in the Ustaša's Ideology and Practice*

In 1929, at the beginning of the movement, the Ustaša's leadership was collective in nature. Although the Poglavnik had the upper hand in the Ustaša's leadership, he was nevertheless presented as *primus inter pares*, as part of the movement's larger charismatic circle of initiates. Pavelić's charismatic claims were soon consolidated, however, resulting in an



Picture 3: The Ustaša constitution, published in 1932.

explicit cult of his exceptional personal qualities and qualifications. The Ustaša was thus presented as a vehicle of the Poglavnik's personality and political thought. It was the Poglavnik who authored the Ustaša's constitution and the leading principles of the movements; his writings provided the main ideological guidance for the movement.

The Ustaša's organization was shaped by the charismatic principle. Adopted in 1932 (and republished in 1941), the "Ustaša constitution" (see above Picture 3) spelled out the main organizational principles of the movement.¹⁸⁶ Although less elaborated than its Legionary equivalent, *The Nest Leader's Manual*, the "constitution" established the basic ideo-

¹⁸⁶ The constitution (Ustav), was issued by Pavelić's decree in 1932; the document states that the constitution was elaborated and signed on January 7, 1929, in Zagreb by the movement's founders. For its republication, see "Ustav Ustaša," *Hrvatski Narod* no. 109 (May 31, 1941), 1.

logical tenets of the movement, together with the Ustaša's Principles discussed above. The constitution presented the Ustaša as a revolutionary organization tasked with liberating Croatia through an armed uprising leading to the establishment of an autonomous state.

The Ustaša's organization was heavily centralized. Its pyramid of power was topped by the Poglavnik, an absolute leader. He was assisted by Glavni ustaški stan (the Supreme Ustaša Headquarters), and especially by the Poglavnih Pobočnika (the Council of Deputy Leaders), made up of up to twelve members nominated and dismissable by the Poglavnik. In case of vacancy, the Poglavnik was to be elected by the Ustaša founders, represented by the Supreme Ustaša Headquarters. The Supreme Ustaša Headquarters was responsible for all aspects relating to the Ustaša organization, including recruitment into the movement, the training of members, discipline, work and general performance of duties.

The Ustaša was further organized into *tabor* (commune), *logor* (county) and *stožer* (district), all responsible to the Glavni ustaški stan. Commune, county, and district leaders were appointed and dismissed, by way of a Poglavnik's decree, on behalf of the Supreme Ustaša Headquarters. This territorial-administrative organization might be surprising for a movement that was outlawed in Croatia, acted mainly abroad, and had limited contact with grassroots members in Croatia proper, except for clandestine networks constantly hunted down by the Yugoslav police. But the organizational structure of the movement was in fact meant to emphasize the "organic" link between the Croatian national identity and its territory, illustrating the importance assigned to the national homeland in the Ustaša ideology.

The Ustaša was a totalitarian paramilitary organization that swore oaths of total devotion and submission to the leader. According to Clause IX of the constitution, any Croat capable of fighting could become an Ustaša member, on the condition that he "is completely loyal to the fundamental Ustaša program" and "is ready to take and fulfill all duties, to which he is obliged by the Ustaša regulations and to fulfill all the orders he is given by the Ustaša authorities and one's superiors." The constitution nevertheless differentiated between active members, who enrolled in the movement prior to the general uprising and were to be permanent Ustaša fighters, and reserve members, who would join the uprising and were to be considered members only as long as they fought under the Ustaša flag. This two-tier membership scheme was meant to differentiate veterans from new members. It was a way to reward permanent commitment while blocking the upward mobility of opportunist members.

Enrollment in the Ustaša was a lifelong commitment, like a conversion. Once one was enrolled in the organization, the only way out was to be released from service by a decree signed by the Poglavnik. This stipulation established a direct, personal link between the charismatic leader and its followers, implying that the Ustaša members were in Pavelić's personal service. It also provided the charismatic leader with a means of coercion and control, implying that an Ustaša member could never renounce his membership unless expressly permitted by the leader himself; defection or treason was punished by execution.

The charismatic bond, characterized by total and unconditional submission to the leader, was consecrated by a mandatory oath of allegiance performed by all members:

I swear by God almighty and everything that is sacred to me that I shall follow the Ustaša's principles and will submit to its regulations and will unconditionally perform all decrees of Ustaša leadership, that I shall keep every secret strictly confined within me and never tell anything to anyone. I swear that I shall fight within the Ustaša ranks for the achievement of the independent Croatian state and will do everything that the leadership decrees. *If I am to violate this oath, I am to be, by the Ustaša regulations, punished with the death sentence.* So help me God. Amen. (Clause XI)

The "constitution" placed a special emphasis on discipline within the organization; to this end, it established a distinct Ustaša judicature in Ustaša courts. Authority was exercised by the Poglavnik on behalf of the Supreme Ustaša Headquarters, who transferred and delegated it to authorized Ustaša functionaries at the local level.

II.3.2. *Unleashing the Nation's Creative Forces: The Poglavnik and the National Revolution*

Providence has sent us the Poglavnik. Providence created the historic date of July 14, 1889. We are grateful to God for that date.¹⁸⁷

With the establishment of the NDH, the cult of the charismatic leader became the main ideological axis of the NDH regime, shaping its rites and rituals and providing an educational role model for the youth. The Poglavnik's personality, thought and deeds were placed at the very heart of the regime's propaganda. His portraits adorned all official buildings

¹⁸⁷ Danijel Crljen, ed., *Poglavnik—život, misao i djela* (Zagreb: Povjereništvo za odgoj i promidžbu u postrojiništvu, 1944), 16.

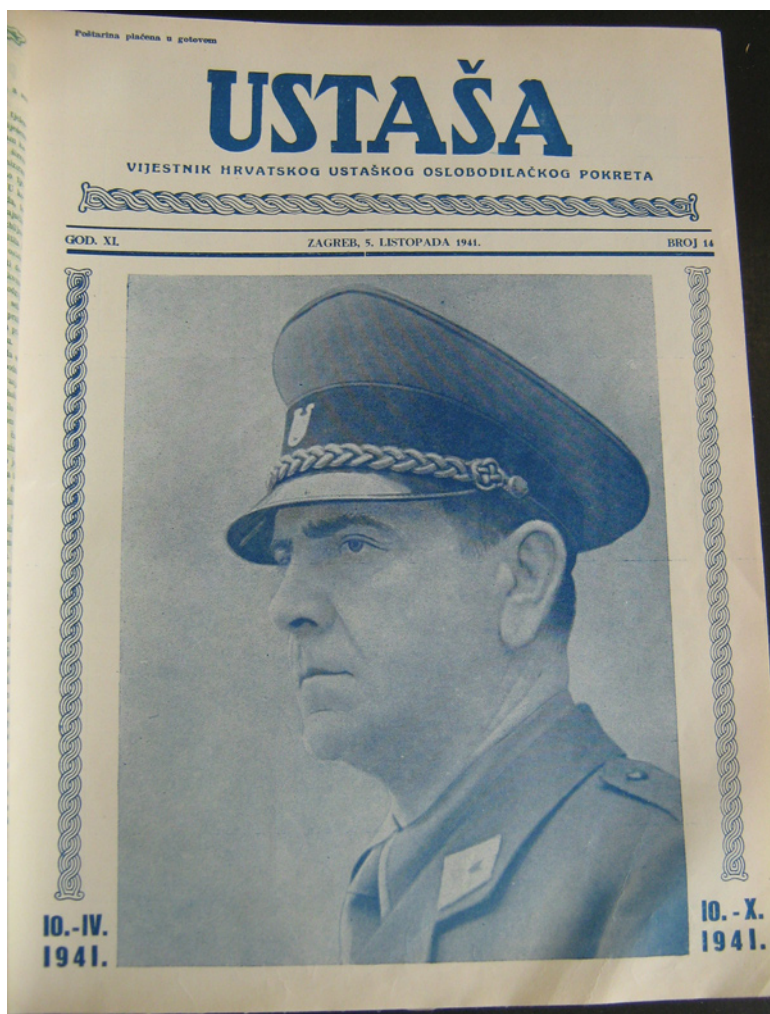
and dominated the Ustaša's official publications. His works, translated into Croatian and published in official editions, were to function as the ideological foundation of the new state.

The cult of the Poglavnik also shaped the regime's official rites and rituals. In 1942 a decree issued by Minister of Education S. Ratković mandated the celebration of "our great Poglavnik" Ante Pavelić's name day, on June 13, in all state or private schools.¹⁸⁸ June 13 was proclaimed a school holiday; celebrations were to follow a strict scenario, starting with a church service for Christian pupils (substituted with a prayer after the noon *salah* for Muslim pupils); continuing by lauding the Poglavnik as "a patriot, politician, and statesman," and evocations of his lifelong struggle for Croatian independence; singing and recitations of poems dedicated to the Poglavnik; readings of excerpts from Pavelić's work, most importantly his work *Strahote zabluda* (The Horrors of Illusions);¹⁸⁹ and finishing with the singing of the Ustaša and state anthems. The whole ceremony was meant to instill in the youth awareness of the charismatic qualities of Pavelić, "the national genius who brought to life century-old aspirations," followed by an urge to emulate his personality: "Let the Croatian youth see in him the most shining example of love and sacrifice for his people." The Poglavnik, claimed the decree, "stopped the stream of historical development and changed its direction to a new course." The revival of Croatia was thus organically tied to Pavelić's activity: "With His statesmanship work, the Independent State of Croatia has been created, and the Croats have become independent and free." As a charismatic leader, Pavelić had the ability to unleash the creative forces in the Croats: "He has proven that a strong constructive sense for nation-building exists in Croats." Pavelić's charismatic cult had an educational purpose; it was meant to forge the new man through an "anthropological revolution" from within, one that "has to be carried out by *internal cleansing, liberation from various illusions, and by strengthening the national consciousness.*"

Pavelić's charismatic claims were further synthesized in Danijel Crljen's apologetic work *Poglavnik-život, misao i djela* (The Leader: Life,

¹⁸⁸ Prof. S. Ratković, "Proslava Poglavnikova imendana," *Official Gazette*, no. 118, May 29, 1942.

¹⁸⁹ See also the following writings by Ante Pavelić: *Dr. Ante Pavelić riješio je hrvatsko pitanje*, ed. Ivo Bogdan (Zagreb: Europa, 1942); *Errori e orrori: comunismo e bolscevismo in Russia e nel mondo: le teorie comuniste e la prassi bolscevica nella Russia sovietica e nella propaganda mondiale* (Siena: Editori ex combattenti, 1938; 2nd ed., Varese: Istituto per gli studi di politica internazionale, 1941); *Le restauration economique des pays danubiens*; and *Strahote zabluda* (Zagreb, 1941).



Picture 4: The cover of *Ustaša*, the official journal of the Ustaša movement, November 10, 1941, celebrating six months since the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia

The decoration framing the cover emulated the old, ninth-century bas-relief representing the Croat king Tomislav, symbolizing Croatia's revived statehood, and thus providing an illustration of the cult of authenticity. The portrait of Ante Pavelić as a military commander and his sober pose and facial expression is meant to emphasize his charisma and the organic link between the NDH, the Ustaša movement and its leader. The cover thus merges two major themes of the Ustaša ideology: the ancient, Christian roots of the Croat people and Ante Pavelić's charismatic mission to bring about the regeneration of ancient Croatia.

Thoughts and Deeds).¹⁹⁰ In his introduction to this volume, which consists of excerpts from Pavelić's works, Crljen presents the Poglavnik as a providential man sent by God to redeem the Croatian people. "On July 14, exactly one hundred years after the French Revolution, a man was born whom Providence has assigned to conduct the most significant revolution in Croatia: to restore this country as a State. That man was Ante Pavelić from the village of Bradine, under the Ivan Mountain in Herzegovina."¹⁹¹ He continues by saying, "It was Providence itself that wanted the one whom she determined to be a leader and ideologue of the Croatian people to be the rebuilder of the Croatian State, to get acquainted from its youngest days with the source itself of Croatian peasant, worker and citizen."¹⁹² Pavelić is presented as a charismatic leader par excellence, full of confidence, commitment, determination and trust in his divine mission. Crljen emphasizes the revolutionary nature of Pavelić's political activity and the numerous sacrifices involved in pursuing this cause.¹⁹³ The Poglavnik was presented as someone who could appeal to the "soul of his people" and awaken it. His abilities corresponded with Croatia's needs, which "required a man to be born to it, who will organize all its spiritual and physical forces and start a revolution."¹⁹⁴

II.3.3. *The Captain: Corneliu Zelea Codreanu as a Charismatic Leader*

The foundation of the Legionary ideology was the charismatic cult of Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, proclaimed by Legionary propaganda as "a new Messiah," the instrument sent by the Archangel Michael to fulfill his commandments in order to bring salvation to the Romanian people.

Codreanu's charismatic persona developed gradually. He emerged as a regional student leader at the University of Iași but had difficulties in imposing himself as national representative, especially to Bucharest-based students.¹⁹⁵ It was the 1923 student trial and mostly his assassination of Prefect Manciu in 1924 and his subsequent acquittal that projected him as a leader of the nationalist youth movement. His "heroic" but criminal deeds, as well as his acquittal, assured Codreanu immediate fame and

¹⁹⁰ Crljen, ed., *Poglavnik—život, misao i djela*.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁹⁵ See Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), Bucharest, Ministerul Afacerilor Interne, Diverse, file 8/1925.

transformed him from a regional to a national leader. During the 1925 trial for Manciu's assassination, an impressive amount of propaganda literature presented Codreanu as a predestined popular hero.¹⁹⁶ On June 13, 1925, Codreanu's wedding ceremony took the form of a mass celebration, paving the way for his charismatic cult.¹⁹⁷ A month later, Codreanu became godfather to more than 100 children born on his wedding day.¹⁹⁸

The creator of Codreanu's messianic cult at the political level was Ion I. Moța, second in rank in the Legion and generally regarded as its "gray eminence" in ideological terms. The son of a Transylvanian priest active in the Romanian national movement in Austria-Hungary, Moța was referred to by his "comrades" as "the Saint," since he professed a very mystic religiosity that shaped the ideology of the movement. In his writings, Moța imagined all the steps of this messianic scenario with Codreanu as the protagonist: 1) Codreanu's divine mission: "The Captain leads us with his fortune from God and with his intuitive, unique power. Nobody but God inspires him, because He is sent by God."¹⁹⁹ 2) The revelation: "If I have satisfaction in life... [it] is that of being entrusted by God to discover the Captain in Corneliu."²⁰⁰ "I am happy and die blissfully because I had the capacity to feel your call, to understand it, and to serve you. You are the Captain."²⁰¹ 3) The recognition of Codreanu's charismatic authority over his followers: "Thus our organization has a leader *whom no one elected* but who has the consensus of all those who, seduced by a mysterious force, have come to constitute, under the leader's direction, the disciplined nests of the organization. Our leader is Corneliu Zelea Codreanu."²⁰² 4) The eulogy of Codreanu's leadership: "I have seen in this man a providential human being sent us by God to redeem our people from the destruction forced upon us by our centuries-old enemies. Choosing the title of

¹⁹⁶ See A.M., *Micul Dor și Marele Dor. Căntece populare, strigături de joc, colinde de sfintele sărbători, doine, căntece frumoase de dragoste adunate de prin foi și publicații să le citească tot românul*, (Iași, 1925), Series: Biblioteca Generația Nouă, no. 2, ANIC, Fond Direcția Generală a Poliției, file 49/1925.

¹⁹⁷ Vezi ANIC, fond DGP 51/1925.

¹⁹⁸ The practice, which had a long tradition in Romanian political life, held a central role in Legionary ritualism. Each male member of the Legion had the obligation to become, within five months of his enrollment, the godfather of five young couples and to subsequently bring them into the Legion. See "Organizarea Legiunii 'Archangelul Mihail,'" *Pământul Strămoșesc* 1, no. 4 (September 15, 1927), 1.

¹⁹⁹ Moța, in Crăcea, *Dezvăluiri legionare*, vol. 2, 23.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰² Ibid., 23.

Captain, I wanted to place him in the ranks of the world's famous captains, as was, for instance, Hannibal. I do not think that events will prove me wrong. Corneliu Codreanu will remain in the national and political history of the people over centuries, as its leading light: Codreanu."²⁰³

Codreanu's charismatic claims were further synthesized by Ion Banea in an article published in *Axa* in 1933²⁰⁴ and later in an ample hagiographic work entailed *Căpitanul*, published in 1936.²⁰⁵ Banea portrayed Codreanu in multiple and complementary roles, as a religious prophet, spiritual reformer, predestined hero and political innovator. Codreanu was celebrated as a revolutionary leader and was represented in view of the local panoply of heroic figures as the end result of a teleological line of Romanian historical development. He was compared to distinguished historical figures such as Moldova's medieval prince Stephen the Great (1457–1504) and was addressed with the title of Captain, inspired by the mythology of the *haiducs*, popular outcasts fighting for social justice. Legionary propaganda also emphasized Codreanu's exceptional personal gifts, such as his physical appearance and power of attraction, regarded as confirmation of his charismatic qualifications.

Codreanu's self-identification fulfills all the subjective criteria for distinguishing a charismatic leader: power of vision, sense of mission, confidence in the movement and in himself as the chosen one, and faith in the possibility of deliverance. The picture of a leader put forward by Codreanu in his programmatic work *Pentru legionari* strongly resembled the ideal type of charismatic leader.²⁰⁶ Codreanu argued that a powerful mass movement needed a great leader (*un mare conducător*), portrayed as a rare mixture of experienced military commander and predestined charismatic hero: "Not everybody can perform this function. There is a need for a skilled man, with inborn qualities, who knows the laws of organization, development and struggle of a popular movement."²⁰⁷

In Codreanu's view, in order to qualify as a great leader, one had to possess the following spiritual qualities: an unusual power of attraction, a capacity for love, remarkable organizational skills, good knowledge of people, the power to educate followers, a capacity for leadership, a feeling for battle, courage, resistance and strong commitment to a cause. The

²⁰³ Ibid., 205.

²⁰⁴ Ion Banea, "Căpitanul," *Axa* 2, no. 21 (October 29, 1933), 1.

²⁰⁵ Ion Banea, *Căpitanul* (Sibiu: "Totul pentru țară," 1936).

²⁰⁶ Codreanu, "Critica conducătorului," *Pentru legionari*, 260–263.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 260.

leader had to be not merely a theoretician but a man of action, able “to dominate the movement and to control it.”²⁰⁸

While the idealized portrait of the leader fulfilled an obvious propagandistic function, Codreanu’s fanaticism nevertheless suggests the internalization of the charismatic behavioral model, based on the belief in magic and the predestined divine mission. Codreanu constantly legitimized his leadership by citing his charismatic vision: “From the first moment I have had a clear vision of the final victory. I have assumed the full responsibility of leadership. From that time I have suffered many difficulties, dangers and innumerable risks, but this vision of victory has never left me.”²⁰⁹

Codreanu’s prison diary, *Însemnări* (Notes), written before his execution in 1938, confirms Codreanu’s intimate belief in his charismatic mission. Following the behavioral scenario of *imitatio Christi*, he interpreted his suffering as Christ’s Passion:

Wednesday, June 15, 1938: When I finished the reading of the Gospel, I understood that I was in this prison by the will of God, that however innocent I was according to human justice, he punished me for my sins and put my faith to the test. I calmed down; serenity descended upon the agitation and the passions of this world.²¹⁰

Codreanu’s self-identification, the type of self-legitimacy he claimed and the leader image propagated by the Legionary propaganda are all important elements in understanding the role charismatic authority played as an organizational principle in building up the Legion’s structure. But it should also be stressed that charisma was a mutual, interactive relationship between the leader and his followers, based on a constant dialogue and even confrontation between the leader and his “offer,” on the one hand, and the followers, their needs and horizon of expectations on the other.

The Legion’s rule was based on Codreanu’s charismatic personality, which was presented as a role model for every legionary, and for the Romanian youth, in general: to facilitate the internationalization of Codreanu’s persona, life struggles, and deeds, his political and biographical writings as well as propaganda photos and posters with the leader were printed in 1940 in huge numbers and distributed to Legionary organizations

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Codreanu, *Cărticica șefului de cuib* Bucharest 42.

²¹⁰ Corneliu Zelea-Codreanu, *Însemnări de la Jilava* [Notes from the Jilava prison], 5th ed., (Bucharest: Majadahonda, 1995), 48.

throughout the country: a report of the Prime Minister Office filled on 21 March 1941 mentioned 39,289 printed copies of *For My Legionaries* (out of which 30,159 had already been distributed); 19,442 copies of *Circulars and Manifestos* (out of which 30,159 had already been distributed), 22,284 photos of Codreanu, and no less than 166,657 copies of *The Nest Leader's Manual* (out of which 30,159 had already been distributed).²¹¹

II.3.4. *Charismatic Leadership versus Party Organization*

The charismatic nature of the Legion also shaped its ideology, organizational structure and political trajectory. In August 1927 the Legion announced its first organizational structure, made up of four sections. The first, and most important, was that of "the youth"; the second, "protecting" section was composed of "mature men"; the third, "assisting" section encompassed women; and the fourth, "international" section was made up of Romanians living abroad.²¹² Legion leadership was to be exercised jointly by a council composed of former or current student leaders, with the latter granted only a consultative vote; and by the Senate, made up of elected personalities over fifty years of age.²¹³ Originally conceived as the highest authority within the Legion, the Senate assembled for the first time only in 1930, and it actually had a consultative and decorative role. Its members were appointed by Codreanu, rather than being elected on a regional basis as previously intended.²¹⁴ As a collegial body consisting of elders, the Senate was nevertheless meant to provide symbolic legitimacy to the Legionary decision-making process, by formally guaranteeing "that the law which is applied is really authentically traditional."²¹⁵

Despite its collective leading bodies, the Legion actually had an authoritarian structure based on the undisputed leadership of "the Captain" and on a hierarchical line of command. Its organization was spelled out in

²¹¹ See the address of the General Secretary of Prime Minister's Office, no. 17038, 21 March 1941, CNSAS Archive, Fond Operativ, file I 234980 "Codreanu Corneliu și alți," 9–10. Since, at the time, the Legion was out of power and favor, the remaining printed materials were returned to Codreanu's wife, together with royalties for the sold copies.

²¹² "Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail," *Pământul Strămoșesc* 1, no. 2 (August 15, 1927), 3–4; and "Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail," *Pământul Strămoșesc* 1, no. 5 (October 1, 1927), 3–4.

²¹³ Organizarea Legiunii Arhanghelul Mihail, 3–4.

²¹⁴ Heinen, *Legiunea "Arhanghelului Mihail,"* 136.

²¹⁵ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 274.

detail in the textbook *Cărticica șefului de cuib* (The Nest Leader's Manual),²¹⁶ as the fundamental law of the Legion, published by Codreanu in 1933 and distributed to all members. The main building blocks of the Legion's structure were its grassroots cells called *cuiburi* (nests), defined as "a group of people united under the command of a single man." As a function of the profile of their members, there were several types of nests, forming the main sections of the Legion: nests of the Brotherhoods of the Cross, composed of those aged between fourteen and twenty, active only in urban areas; nests of the Legionary Corps composed of adult Legionaries, aged between twenty-one and twenty-eight; nests made up of female Legionaries; nests of workers, making up a separate corpus, created in 1936; nests of "mature men," responsible for the education of younger members, making up the political section (*Cărticica*, Point 26).

A nest was made up of three to thirteen members and led by a charismatic leader "emerging naturally." A secretary, a cashier and a courier assisted the leader in his activity. Nest members convened each Saturday evening or at any time the leader deemed necessary. They discussed organizational aspects, debated various political subjects, collected funds, conducted propaganda activities, recruited new members, initiated labor camps and carried out orders sent from the superior echelons of the Legion. Each Sunday, they organized marches in neighboring villages or regions. After six months of existence, nests were granted the right to have their own flag representing the Romanian colors (red, yellow and blue), with a Christian cross on the top. Those nests that had no activity were declared "dead"; for exceptional merits, the most active ones were rewarded with stars on their flag, graded from one to seven.

The flexible system of nests assured an exponential expansion of the Legion's membership. After completing his training, any member could leave his nest and initiate a new cell by bringing in new converts recognizing his leadership. Cells stemming from a common original nest were considered part of a "family" of nests. Such related nests were organized hierarchically; the original cell became the "superior" one, and its leader had authority over all other chiefs in that family. In order to avoid fragmentation, nests from the same locality were obliged to maintain strong organizational ties. They organized regular common gatherings and actions under the authority of the chief of the oldest nest in a family.

²¹⁶ See footnote 185.

Territorially, nests were grouped in garrisons, sectors, counties and regions, led by chiefs appointed by Codreanu and directly responsible to him. In 1937, at the peak of its strength, the Legion encompassed nine regions, corresponding to all historical provinces making up Greater Romania: Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobrogea, Moldova, Bessarabia, Bukovina, Ardeal, Crișana and Timișoara. Every region had a separate leadership for the main sections of the Legion: the Brotherhoods of the Cross, women's fortresses, the Legionary Corps, the Workers' Corps, the Student Corps, and the Political Organization. The latter was invested with authority over the leaders of all the other sections (*Cărticica*, Point 27). In addition, at the national level, above territorial regions, there existed general headquarters of all Legionary sections. They were led by chiefs appointed by Codreanu, as the commander of the Legion (*Conducătorul*), and placed under his direct authority.

The hierarchical structure of the Legion further complicated its membership growth. Upon entering the Legion, new converts were considered simply "members" of the movement. In order to become "Legionaries," they were subject to intensive training during a probation period of up to three years. In addition to the title "Legionary," new ranks of command were established, emulating military hierarchy, such as "Legionary instructor" and "deputy commander." *Cărticica* emphasized that meetings of Legionary chiefs were not democratic but military in character: the leader had to convene his subordinates "as a commander of a regiment calls to order his subaltern officers." Legionary chiefs at all levels had to file detailed monthly reports to their superiors; their activity was closely monitored. There also existed specific organizational functions, such as chiefs of garrisons, counties or regions; chiefs of working teams, labor camps or building-yards. Due to their importance, these functions had priority over military ranks (*Cărticica*, Point 39). In order to prevent the autonomous consolidation of high Legionary leaders, they could retain their posts for a maximum period of one year for regional leaders, and two years for political leaders (*Cărticica*, Point 28). After being released from their function, Legionary chiefs were promoted and became part of the corps of "charismatic commanders."

In sum, the organization of the Legion combined charismatic leadership at both grassroots and top levels with appointed officials named by Codreanu at intermediate levels; and it combined the principle of geographical representation with that of central leadership. The essence of this structure was military hierarchy and unconditional devotion to the

Captain as the supreme charismatic leader. In a circular letter to the Legionaries, Codreanu unambiguously asserted the principle of unconditional devotion to the Legion: "Our glory consists of the only right we have claimed for ourselves from the beginning: that of giving everything to the Guard, without asking for anything in return."²¹⁷

II.3.5. *From Clandestine Terrorism to State Terrorism: Violence in the Ideology and Practice of the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Ustaša Movement*

Both the Legion of the Archangel Michael and the Ustaša movement employed terrorism as a main strategy of political insurgency. As a radical, violent type of political warfare, terrorism has a long pre-history that goes back to antiquity.²¹⁸ As a modern (state) practice terrorism originated, arguably, during the French Revolution. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, terrorism expanded exponentially; it was employed by ideologically driven revolutionary groups, such as Russian populists, leftist anarchists and nationalist fighters.²¹⁹

The Legion and the Ustaša were integral parts of the gallery of inter-war right-wing terrorist organizations. Both movements practiced an ethnic-nationalist type of terrorism whose declared aim was to restore the "rights" and "dignity" of their respective ethnic (interest) groups in relation to a perceived dominant oppressor. There were, however, significant differences in the geopolitical positions and aims of the two terrorist organizations. The Legion acted (in a self-appointed manner) on behalf of a dominant and state-making ethnic group. Its target was not the dismemberment of Greater Romania but, on the contrary, its alleged consolidation, by removing ethnic minorities from positions of economic or sociopolitical influence and by channeling resources exclusively in the interest of ethnic Romanians, thus facilitating their full control over the country's economy and political-administrative apparatus. To do so, however, the Legion fought not only against the "high-status" ethnic minorities

²¹⁷ Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, *Circulări și manifeste* (Madrid: Colectia "Omul Nou," 1951), 21.

²¹⁸ See the example of the first-century Jewish Zealots fighting the Roman occupation of Palestine, and the Muslim sect known as the Assassins established at the beginning of the second millennium, in Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin, "Zealots and Assassins," in *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to al Qaeda*, eds. Gérard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 49–78.

²¹⁹ Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) in Tsarist Russia is generally identified as one of the first modern terrorist organizations. See Yves Ternon, "Russian Terrorism, 1878–1908," in *The History of Terrorism*, eds. Chaliand and Blin, 49–78.

(mostly the Jews, and also the Hungarians), but also against leading Romanian politicians, perceived as corrupt or “sellouts to the Jews.” In fact, the Legion’s terrorism targeted primarily Romanian political elites, naturally because they were the ones holding the power, but also because they were perceived as responsible for the subordinated status of ethnic Romanians “in their own home.” As reported by Codreanu in his autobiographical work *Pentru legionari* (*For My Legionaries*), the Legionary “hierarchy of guilt” was discussed and agreed upon by the leading members of the *Văcărești* group ever since the 1923 student plot:

The first problem posed to us was the following: who had to pay first? Who is more guilty for the terrible state of the country: Romanians or Jews? We agreed unanimously that the first and most guilty are scoundrel Romanians who, for Judas’s money, have betrayed their people. The kikes are our enemies, and as such they hate us, poison us and exterminate us. But the Romanian leaders who place themselves in the same category are more than enemies: they are traitors. The first and most terrible punishment is deserved first of all by the traitor and then by the enemy. If I had a single bullet, and in front of me there were an enemy and a traitor, I would shoot the latter.²²⁰

Accordingly, Codreanu defined the fight against the corrupt and treacherous political establishment—a ‘malaise’ call politicianism—as a precondition for solving the Jewish question: “The Romanian people cannot solve the Jewish question before solving the problem of *politicianism*.”²²¹ This list of priorities gave the Legion an anti-establishment orientation from its very inception. From this perspective, the Legion was engaged not only in an interethnic war against Greater Romania’s ethnic minorities but also in a fratricide against Romanian political elites.

For its part, the Ustaša engaged from the very beginning in a form of ethnic-separatist terrorism. The ultimate aim of its terrorist attacks was to destabilize and eventually dismember Yugoslavia in order to create an independent Croatian state. The Ustaša’s actions were thus closer in nature to the nineteenth-century separatist movements that mushroomed in the Balkans, then under Ottoman and Habsburg domination. Not surprisingly, the Ustaša did not refrain from close cooperation with Yugoslavia’s internal and external enemies. The most notable among these was the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, a terrorist group, together with which the Ustaša planned its most important and successful terrorist

²²⁰ Codreanu, *Pentru legionari*, 169.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

attack, the assassination of King Alexander I in 1934. To achieve its aims after being outlawed by the Yugoslav authorities, the Ustaša found “safe havens” outside the country, in neighboring Hungary and Italy, which both had significant claims on Yugoslavia’s territory. Benefiting from Hungarian and, more importantly, Italian support, the Ustaša prepared armed forces for a guerilla war of liberation, thus combining high-profile terrorist missions with a guerilla struggle for territory. Although some of the Ustaša’s terrorist actions reached their targets, there was always a significant gap between its military capabilities and its ultimate aim of dismembering Yugoslavia. Guerilla actions such as the November 1932 Velebit Uprising, when an Ustaše unit attacked a gendarme outpost in the Lika/Velebit area, were fiascos, as Yugoslav forces easily defeated the Ustaša. The Ustaša was able to reach its goals only in the context of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy’s combined geopolitical hegemony in the Balkans, in 1940. It also had to pay a heavy political price for its external support, by subordinating Croatia to the Axis Powers and making painful territorial concessions.

Yet, as in the case of the Legion, Ustaše terrorist activities did not have an exclusively military function. They were also designed to cultivate a combative spirit and to provide behavioral role models for rank-and-file members. Just as with the Legion, Ustaša propaganda promoted a panoply of martyrs for the fascist cause, made up of Franjo Zrinski, Marko Hranilović, Matija Soldin, Ivan Rošić, Stipe Devčić, etc. Franjo Zrinski was arrested after the 1933 assassination of Dr. Mirko Neudorfer, member of the Chamber of Deputies and former Minister, being accused of assisting in Neudorfer’s murder and planting bombs on railway tracks. Marko Hranilović, Matija Soldin and Ivan Rošić were all executed following show trials in the 1930s for terrorist activity. Stipe Devčić, for example, took part in the failed Ustaša raid on a police station in Brušani and chose to commit suicide rather than to be captured.²²²

More importantly, activists such as Ion Moța in Romania, who died in 1937 while fighting in the Spanish Civil War, or Jure Francetić in the NDH, killed by the Serb partisans in 1942, were presented as saintly figures. The propaganda of the two movements stressed their ascetic lifestyles, their dedication to the national cause and their violent sacrifice.

²²² For a comprehensive discussion, see Rory Yeomans, “Cults of Death and Fantasies of Annihilation: The Croatian Ustaša Movement in Power, 1941–1945,” *Central Europe* 10, no. 2 (September–October 2005), 234–256.

II.4. *"Saving" the Nation through Ethnic Cleansing:
Racial-Religious Discrimination and Extermination in the Legion's
and the Ustaša's Ideology and Practice*

In order to understand the role that violence played in the Legion's and the Ustaša's ideology and practice, one needs to explore the core concept of rebirth and regeneration, especially its dark side, that of murderous cleansing. Numerous scholars have pointed out that the myth of rebirth and regeneration constitutes the ideological core of fascist ideology. Yet the concrete content of the myth of regeneration and the ritual practices associated with it have, to date, remained insufficiently unexplored. As the etymological and genealogical history of the term amply demonstrates, regeneration is a notoriously polysemantic term, employed in various discursive traditions with at least four distinct, albeit interrelated, meanings. According to Encarta, the verb "to regenerate" can mean 1) to form again, or become formed again; 2) to recover from decline, that is, to return from a state of decline to a revitalized state, or cause something to do this; 3) to replace a body part by new growth: to replace lost tissue or a lost limb or organ with a new growth, or grow again after loss; and 4) to restore and renew somebody morally or spiritually.²²³

What was the meaning of the concept of regeneration in the Legionary and the Ustaša discourses, and what were the ritual practices associated with it? Fascist ideologues employed the concept of regeneration to refer to a variety of meanings and practices. The act of regeneration was to take place simultaneously at different organizational levels, pertaining to different recipients: humankind; the nation, as "God's chosen people," bringing about the regeneration of humankind; the fascist units as chosen warriors bringing about salvation; or the individual who entered the fascist movement and underwent a spiritual and moral transformation. The salvation of these entities was described in view of different complementary, overlapping, or even contradictory discursive traditions: religious-charismatic; political-ethnic; medical; and individual-baptismal. The work of salvation was dependent on God's divine protection and miracles; on the leader's charismatic qualities; and on the fascists' "heroic" fight against decline and degeneration by military, moral or even eugenic means.

²²³ A fifth meaning, unrelated to the issues addressed here, is to restore digital electrical signals. See <http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/dictionary/DictionaryResults.aspx?lextype=3&search=regeneration>.

The utopian fascist project of regenerating the nation did not just encompass the idea of spiritual rebirth and regeneration of the nation through an inner transformation of the followers. The regeneration of the nation was as much as a pedagogical work of education and movement-building, leading to the creation of the new man through conversion and new forms of socialization, as it was one of cleansing and exclusion of the unwanted Other. It invariably referred to the renewal of the “authentic living material” of the nation on the one hand and the removal of the infected tissues of the nation on the other. The language employed by the fascist texts was at times heroic-militaristic, arguing for the revival of the fighting spirit of the nation, and at other times medical, alluding to the regeneration of its essential parts.

An integral part of the fascist “regenerative” project was therefore the idea of cleansing the nation by removing the unwanted elements who allegedly “invaded” the national land and affected the ethnic/cultural/racial purity of the nation. The Legionary and the Ustaša ideologies are representative in this respect, as both targeted “the Other” in their effort to restore the purity of the nation and to elevate it to the “dignified status” it deserved in regional or world affairs. The Ustaša was anti-Yugoslav and thus predominantly anti-Serbian, as Serbs were the main proponents of Yugoslavism, while the Legion was rabidly anti-Semitic; the Romanians also targeted Hungarians, while anti-Semitism grew steadily in importance in the Ustaša ideology.

The following section will explore the role played by the idea of cleansing in the fascist vision of national salvation, in the adoption of racial anti-Semitic laws, and in the practical implementation of these laws. At first sight, the comparison seems uneven in scale: the Legion of the Archangel Michael appears to be a rare case of a fascist movement that, in its pre-power stage, arguably produced more martyrs than victims. During its short rule, the Legion engaged in open violence against the Jews and a campaign of punishing its domestic political enemies, culminating in the assassination of sixty-five former Romanian political leaders in late November 1940 and in an anti-Jewish pogrom in Bucharest in January 1941. However, as it was ousted from power in January 1941, the Legion was not directly involved in the deportation of Romania’s Jewish population to Transnistria, which was conducted by the Antonescu regime in 1941–1942. By contrast, the Ustaša’s regime appears to be, by far, the most murderous in the Balkans during World War II, running its own concentration camps and being responsible for the extermination of huge numbers of Serbs, Jews and Gypsies (Roma), as well as many dissident Croats.

It must be stressed that the two regimes were not contemporaneous: the Legion of the Archangel Michael was ousted from power in January 1941, while the Ustaša took power in early April of that year. Moreover, although Romania and Croatia were in the same ideological camp, that of the Axis Powers, General Ion Antonescu refused to take part in the partition of Yugoslavia (by occupying parts of the Banat) and was hesitant to recognize the Independent State of Croatia, in view of the traditional good relations and former military alliance between Romania and interwar Yugoslavia (Romania was generally interested in the existence of a strong Yugoslav state as a geopolitical counterweight to an unchecked expansion of Bulgaria in the region). Following Pavelić's direct request for recognition and Nazi Germany's urge to do so, Antonescu finally recognized the NDH on May 6, 1941, which prompted the London-based Yugoslav government in exile to break its diplomatic relations with Romania.²²⁴ The chronological gap between the two regimes should not, however, rule out the possibility of bilateral ideological influences between the Ustaša and the Legion.²²⁵

II.4.1. *Building the Croatian Nation-State in a Fascist Way: The Ustaša Regime of State Terror*

The Independent State of Croatia (NDH) was established on April 10, 1941, following the joint German-Italian invasion of Yugoslavia. Needless to say, the NDH was not a continuation of the Croatian Banovina that existed in 1939–1941, but a distinct political entity. Entirely detached from Yugoslavia and placed under Italian and German patronage, the new state was animated by a different ideology and exercised jurisdiction over a different territory. At the political level, the discontinuity between the two entities is highlighted by the fact that Vladko Maček, who obtained the 1939 agreement leading to the establishment of the Croatian Banovina and arguably Croatia's most popular politician, refused to assume the leadership

²²⁴ Eugene Boia, *Romania's Diplomatic Relations with Yugoslavia in the Interwar Period, 1919–1941* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1993), 308–310.

²²⁵ Ideological cross-references between the two movements were rather rare. The most notable is Grigorie Manolescu's apologetic article titled "Corneliu Codreanu: The Founder of the Romanian Movement the Iron Guard," printed in Croatian translation in the newspaper *Ustaša. Vijesnik Hrvatskog ustaškog oslobodilačkog pokreta* (April 15, 1945), 15. Published at the very end of the war, this evocation of Codreanu's fascist personality was accompanied by a call for fighting the war until the bitter end, thus making it a propagandistic attempt to boost morale in NDH at a critical point for the Axis coalition.

of the new state.²²⁶ Facing this refusal, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy brought to power the Ustaša movement which, as noted above, was active mostly on Italian soil and had enjoyed the financial, political and logistical support of the Italian state.²²⁷ In territorial terms, the NDH was larger than the Croatian Banovina, encompassing not only Croatia proper but also all of Bosnia-Herzegovina and parts of Serbia. At the same time, the NDH was forced to cede central Dalmatia to Fascist Italy (until its end in 1943). As a result, the Ustaša exercised jurisdiction over a large territory, inhabited by a multiethnic and multi-religious population, consisting of 3.3 million Catholic Croats, almost 2 million Orthodox Serbs, 800,000 Muslim Bosnians, 175,000 Germans, 40,000 Jews, 20,000 to 30,000 Roma and 170,000 others.²²⁸

²²⁶ Vladko Maček was subsequently arrested by the NDH regime in October 1941 and interned in the Jasenovac camp. Following an interpellation by members of the Croatian Peasant Party in the NDH Sabor in February 1942, in March 1942 Pavelić recalled Maček from the camp and placed him under house arrest on his estate in Kupanec. This hostile attitude was officially justified with the accusation that Maček betrayed the cause of the Croat nation in 1939 by accepting a compromise with Yugoslav authorities over the issue of Croatian statehood. It is apparent, however, that Maček's arrest also had to do with the great political prestige and popularity he accumulated within Croatia, which led the NDH leadership to perceive him as a potential power rival. On Vladko Maček's life, see his biographical account *In the Struggle for Freedom* (New York: R. Speller and Sons, 1957).

²²⁷ On this support, see Pasquale Iuso, *Il Fascismo e gli Ustacia, 1929–1941. Separatismo Croato in Italia* (Rome: Gangemi Editore, 1998). Interestingly, the Ustaša movement was apparently not Fascist Italy's and Nazi Germany's first choice for an ally in Croatia. As elsewhere, the two states showed interest in reaching an agreement with more established, authoritative politicians who could guarantee political stability. They preferred a figure like Vladko Maček in Croatia, just as they preferred Admiral Miklós Horthy in Hungary and General Ion Antonescu in Romania. The fact that Nazi Germany accepted the Legion's removal from government in January 1941 in Romania and brought fascist movements to power in East-Central Europe only when there was no other viable option (as with the Ustaša in April 1941 and the Arrow Cross as late as 1944) confirm that the Nazis valued political stability and smooth economic-military cooperation over ideological affinity with related political regimes, who were revolutionary-driven and thus chaos-producing allies.

²²⁸ I employ the figures on the NDH population in December 1941 provided by Holm Sundhaussen, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte Kroatiens im nationalsozialistischen Großraum 1941–1945. Das Scheitern einer Ausbeutungsstrategie* (Stuttgart, 1983), 99 (for an ample commentary on the evolution of this population, see 98–102). See also Holm Sundhaussen, "Der Ustascha-Staat: Anatomie eines Herrschaftssystems," *Österreichische Osthefte* 37 (1995), 497–533, esp. 500. It should be noted that the population of the Independent State of Croatia cannot be accurately estimated, because the only available censuses on Yugoslav population date from 1931 and 1948. The NDH's population can thus only be inferred by taking the 1931 data as a basis and calculating the estimated natural demographic growth of each component province of the NDH for the decade 1931–1941. Using this method, the Croatian economist Vladimir Žerjavić came out with the following figures on the NDH's population in April 1941: Croats 3,366,000, Serbs 2,089,000, Muslims 879,000, Germans 160,000

In its external affairs, the NDH was fully subordinated to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, who maintained troops on its territory and placed certain provinces under direct occupation. Formally, the new state was proclaimed a monarchy; the throne was offered to the Italian Duke of Spoleto, who nominally reigned under the title of Tomislav II, thus alluding to the revival of the medieval Croat kingdom led by the legendary king Tomislav I. In practice, the Duke of Spoleto never set foot on Croatian soil; he also abdicated in 1943, upon Italy's change of regime and exit from the war. In internal affairs, the NDH was effectively led by Ante Pavelić and the Ustaša movement. Although the two "protecting" powers monitored political developments in the new state closely, Pavelić held considerable internal autonomy to implement the Ustaša's vision on "cleansing" Croat society.

In line with the charismatic core of the Ustaša's ideology, the establishment of the new state was presented as the fulfillment of a divinely inspired mission of rebirth and regeneration of the Croat nation. On April 10, 1941, under the slogan "God and the Croats," Slavko Kvaternik announced, in a radio address, the "resurrection of the Croatian State," with the help of "God's providence" but also following "the will of our allies," "the painstaking centuries-old struggle of the Croatian people," as well as "the great sacrifice of our Poglavnik Dr. Ante Pavelić, and the Ustaša movement, both at home and abroad."²²⁹ Deliberately aired on Easter Sunday, Kvaternik's speech directly linked the resurrection of the Independent State of Croatia with the "resurrection of the Son of our God," thus asserting the behavioral model of *imitatio Christi* as the symbolic-ideological basis of the new regime. In order to establish the authority of the Ustaša rule but to also strengthen its charismatic authority, the new regime demanded that the armed forces "immediately take an oath of allegiance to the independent state of Croatia and its Poglavnik." Finally, presenting himself as the Poglavnik's deputy and plenipotentiary, Kvaternik claimed for himself the leadership of the government and the supreme command of all the armed forces in the new state.

and Hungarians 89,000, out of an estimated total of 6,853,000. See his monograph *Gubici stanovništva Jugoslavije u drugom svjetskom ratu* (Zagreb: Jugosavensko viktimološko društvo, 1989), mostly 61–66. Although there are disagreements concerning some elements of this demographic calculations (concerning, for instance, the natural growth of rural ethnic Serbs, which is often seen as higher than his average calculation), Žerjavić's estimates are often employed by foreign and even by Serbian scholars. For reference to Žerjavić's figures, see, for example, Ramet, "The NDH: An Introduction," 4.

²²⁹ *Hrvatski Narod*, special edition, Zagreb, April 10, 1941.

In the Ustaša ideology, the rebirth of Croatia was presented as a multi-part process encompassing the following elements: 1) the revival of the Croatian state; 2) the restoration of the Croat national territory, which extended into several provinces of Yugoslavia, including Bosnia-Herzegovina; 3) the creation of the new man, as a new type of warrior emulating the Poglavnik's personality; 4) the restoration of the purity of the Croatian language, by purging it of neologisms and foreign influences; and 5) the cleansing of the nation of racially ethno-religious or ideologically alien elements.

In order to gain popular support and legitimacy, the Ustaša's official propaganda tried to stress the "positive" aspects of its regenerative project, portraying its activities as constructive and its fight for self-determination as a legitimate, self-defensive reaction: "The Ustaša is not an oppressor nor a barbarian, the Ustaša is not a destroyer. The Ustaša is a guardian of hard-won state independence, he is a defender of the hard-won works of his Poglavnik."²³⁰ To substantiate this point, the regime engaged in cultural policies for the linguistic homogenization and cultural unification of the nation through language, media, editorial and schooling policies.

The "restoration" of the purity of the Croatian language was an important part of the campaign of nation-building the fascist way. In a nationalist spirit, "The Decree-Law on the Croatian Language, Its Purity and Spelling," adopted on August 14, 1941, signed by Ante Pavelić and Minister of Education Mile Budak, proclaimed the distinctiveness of the Croatian language, which it stated was "not identical to any other language, nor a dialect of any other language, nor related to any other nation's common language" (art. 1).²³¹ The basis of the Croatian official and literary language was declared "the štokavian dialect with jekavian and iekavian pronunciation" (art. 4).²³² The usage of other dialects was not forbidden,

²³⁰ "Ustaški dužnostnici moraju raditi ustaški," *Ustaša. Vjesnik Hrvatskog ustaškog oslobodilačkog pokreta* 11, no. 3 (July 3, 1941), 2, cited in Tomislav Jonjić, "From Bias to Erroneous Conclusions," *Review of Croatian History* 6 (2007), no. 1, 231.

²³¹ "Decree: On the Croatian Language, Its Purity and Spelling," August 14, 1941, *Zločini: Na Jugoslovenskim prostorima u Prvom i Drugom svetskom ratu. Zbornik dokumenata*, vol. 1, 512–513, trans. by Siniša Djurić, added to Pavelić Papers in January 2003. See also Petar Požar, ed., *Ustaša: Dokumenti o ustaškom pokretu* (Zagreb: Zagrebačka stvarnost, 1995).

²³² The Štokavian dialect has three main sub-dialects or 'accents': Ekavian, called eastern, spoken primarily in Serbia; Ikavian, called western and spoken mainly in parts of Slavonia, Western Bosnia, Western Herzegovina, and Central Dalmatia; and the Ijekavian, called southern, spoken in many parts of Croatia, southern Dalmatia, most of Bosnia, Herzegovina Montenegro, and Western Serbia. Due to mass migrations, among other factors,

but publications in those dialects were to be marked as such. The decree established proper spelling and grammar rules, restricted the public or private use of foreign words (arts. 2–3) and set penalties for violations of these, in order to insure “the protection of the purity of the language and its spelling.” A special agency was established within the Ministry of Education to monitor the process by which “the Croatian language is cleansed,” with a special focus on the teaching of the Croatian language in schools.

Despite attempts to obscure the destructive side of the Ustaša’s ideology, the implementation of the Ustaša’s nation-building project had at its core a process of violent ethnic cleansing. The idea of cleansing Croatia of internal enemies was anticipated by Pavelić even before the official proclamation of the NDH. In a radio address broadcast by Italian radio on April 5, 1941, Pavelić urged the Croats to take arms and “arise to cleanse [čistimo] our homeland of enemies and to establish our freedom in our own house, in a sovereign Independent State of Croatia, in which all Croatian lands will be united . . .” The idea of cleansing did not refer only to spiritual rebirth and regeneration of the new men. Pavelić unambiguously stated that in the new Croatian state “all weeds will be eradicated [iskorijenjen sav korov] that were planted by the foreign hand of our enemies.”²³³

II.4.2. *Racial Legislation in the Independent State of Croatia (NDH)*

Once it gained political power, the Ustaša engaged in an assiduous and violent process of nation- and state-building with the aim of forging a homogeneous and internally unified national community, politically organized in a totalitarian fascist project. As described above, this process involved multiple forms of “cleansing” the Croat state, territory and language from foreign elements. This process underwent several phases, ranging from the adoption of discriminatory legislation to its violent implementation.²³⁴

the history of these sub-dialects is complex and does not relate clearly and unambiguously to ethnicity, as the Ustaša leadership argued. See Robert D. Greenberg, *Language and Identity in the Balkans: Serbo-Croatian and Its Disintegration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 34–35.

²³³ “Pavelić’s Radio Address to Croatia,” April 5, 1941, in Mijo Bizik, *Ustaška pobjeda*, 69–70; quoted in Viktor Novak, *Magnum Crimen*, 536 (Zagreb, 1947), trans. by Siniša Djurić, added to Pavelić Papers on May 18, 2004.

²³⁴ For comprehensive views of the main stages of the genocidal policy in the Independent State of Croatia, see Dulić, “Mass Killing in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945,” 255–281; and Korb, “Nation-building and mass violence: The Independent State of Croatia, 1941–45,” 291–302.

The legal foundations of the Ustaša's campaign of cleansing were established by the adoption of four main decrees, directly inspired by Nazi legislation. "The Law Decree for the Defense of the People and the State" was passed on April 17, 1941, followed by three additional ones on April 30: "The Law Decree on Citizenship," "The Law Decree on Racial Affiliation" and "The Law Decree on Protection of Aryan Blood and the Dignity of the Croatian People." Concerned with the security of the new state, these decrees distinguished the body of "full citizens" from the regimes' ideological or racial "internal enemies."

The first decree set the basis for the Ustaša regime of terror. It asserted that all those who *attempted* to violate "the honor and life interests of Croatian people" or acted against the Independent State of Croatia were considered guilty of high treason and were to be sentenced to death. Although the decree was demagogically titled "For the Defense of the People and the State," its stipulations were in fact concerned with defending the Ustaša regime, enabling it to inflict terror arbitrarily against its real or imagined enemies. In order to implement these stipulations under an emergency regime, the Ministry of Justice established extraordinary people's courts, which were to work on the basis of court-martial regulations. The only sentence passed was the death penalty; no appeal was possible, and executions were to be carried out within three hours of the conviction.²³⁵

A second "Law-Decree on Citizenship" defined the racial boundaries of what might be called the "Ustaša nation."²³⁶ The decree categorized as "state members" all persons of Aryan origin who had proven, through their conduct, their adherence to the NDH's ideological values. These state-nationals were placed under the protection of the NDH and were to enjoy full citizenship rights.

If the second decree on citizenship was only concerned with the Aryan members of the state and their rights, a third "Law Decree on Racial Affiliation" focused on defining the non-Aryan residents of the new state. The decree is marked by the opposition between Aryans and non-Aryans, as legal-racial categories. The decree defines Aryans, in general terms, as descendants of members of the "European racial community" or their offspring outside Europe. The Aryan origin of a person was to be proven

²³⁵ "Decree on the Establishment of Courts-Martial," May 17, 1941, private collection, trans. by Siniša Djurić, Pavelić Papers, June 27, 2003.

²³⁶ "Zakonska odredba o državljanstvu," *Narodne Novine*, April 30, 1941.

by birth or wedding certificates or, in the case of Muslims, by witness accounts documenting the racial origin of their parents and grandparents. By contrast, non-Aryans were defined as descendants of non-Aryan people, among which the law singles out the Jews and the Gypsies. Those who had three or more Jewish ancestors in the second generation were categorized as Jews. Those with two forebears qualified as Jews only if they professed the Jewish religion at the time of the decree's adoption, were the offspring of unmarried Jewish men or women, or were also married to non-Aryans. Finally, it is important to note that the decree extended the legally inferior category of non-Aryan upon foreigners as well: all persons of the Mosaic faith who had at least two Jewish ancestors or were classified as Jews by the domestic laws of their country were also to be treated as Jews by the NDH (art. 5). The legal-racial definition of the Gypsies was even more drastic; all those who had two or more Gypsy ancestors were treated as non-Aryans (art. 6).

The decree gave state representatives considerable latitude in implementation, thus further exposing the arbitrary character of these ideologically informed categories. A special Racial Committee was established in order to decide on the racial affiliation of all "questionable" cases; the final decision rested with the Interior Ministry. Ultimately, the Poglavnik, as head of the state, had the right to bypass the stipulation of the decree and exempt from the state-assigned categories any non-Aryans who rendered exceptional services to the NDH.

A fourth "Law Decree on the Protection of Aryan Blood and Dignity of Croatian People"²³⁷ was concerned with the relationship between the Aryan members of the Croat nation, who enjoyed full citizenship rights, and the non-Aryan "members of the state," who were non-citizen residents, among which the law singled out the Jews and the Gypsies. The decree aimed at implementing a total marital and sexual segregation between Aryans and non-Aryans. To this end, it strictly forbade marriage between an Aryan and a non-Aryan (arts. 1 and 3). As non-citizen residents, the non-Aryans were forbidden to employ or display symbols of the Croat state or nation, such as flags, colors or emblems. All Jews had to revert to their original family names; all name changes made after December 1, 1918, were annulled. The law allowed, under special permission

²³⁷ "Zakonska odredba o zaštiti arijske krvi i časti Hrvatskog naroda," *Official Gazette*, April 30, 1941, exhibit introduced in the trial of Dinko Šakić, trans. by Snežana Lazović, October 2002.

from the Ministry of the Interior upon the recommendation of a specially appointed Racial-Political Committee, marriages of non-Aryans with persons of Aryan origin if the former had only one or, at most, two ancestors of Jewish or non-European races (such as Gypsies) in the second generation (art. 2). Extramarital sexual relations between Aryans and non-Aryans were strictly forbidden; to prevent such situations, non-Aryans could employ Aryan women as house servants only if the servants were over 45 years old (art. 4). Non-Aryans who violated these rules were charged with the "crime of desecration of a race" and were to be punished with jail or solitary confinement (art. 3). The rape of Aryan virgins by non-Aryans was to be punished by death (art. 3).

Commenting on Ustaša's racial decree, Raul Hilberg pointed out that it was obviously "drafted by experts hands:" not only that it fulfilled many desiderata of German bureaucrats which had not been present in the German legislation, but was even harsher in its racial classification than the German legislation, since it discriminated against people with *two* or more non-Aryan forebears.²³⁸ True, in principle, those who were half- or even fully Jewish could find a way out of their categories, through direct bargaining with Pavelić; this option was, however, totally dependent on Pavelić. The NDH's legal system is further proof that race was a political-bureaucratic rather than a "scientific" category and that it was manipulated by the Ustaša leaders to target their enemies.

Directly inspired by the German racial legislation, these decrees placed the Jews and the Roma outside the law (as non-citizens), thus paving the way for their deportation and physical extermination. To these, Ustaša policy added a third category of undesirable people: the Serbs. Although not subject to racial legislation, since, from the Ustaša's point of view they fell within the Aryan category, the Serbs were nevertheless denounced as a foreign ethno-religious intruder in the body of the Croat nation. In the Ustaša propaganda and ideological writings, the Serbs had long been scapegoated as the most dangerous enemies of the nation, but also as agents of degeneration and decadence. As such, the image of the Serbs as national enemies shared many stereotypes with the image of the Jews as racial enemies, within the larger category of the internal "dominant Other." As for the Roma, they did not prove to be a major concern

²³⁸ Raul Hilberg, *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Vol. 2 (New York [u.a.: Holmes & Meier, 1985), 711.

at the ideological level, as the Jews, but they were legally established as a racially inferior category and as one of the regime's targets.

Overall, the status and treatment of the Jews, Roma and Serbs and the evaluation of Ustaša's murderous policies toward these groups has generated many historiographical debates. These debates have been greatly amplified by the fact that it is very difficult, if not impossible, on the basis of the fragmentary evidence available, to arrive at fully accurate figures concerning the genocidal record of the Ustaša. On the basis of the available data, it can be argued that the scale of terror unleashed by the NDH against its minority groups had to do not only with racial-ideological considerations but also with (geo)political ones, such as the perception of the threat these groups posed to the Ustaša national project, mostly the Serbs. Ivo Goldstein argues that, while the Jews and the Roma were established as racially inferior categories and targeted for total destruction, The Serbs were differentiated from the Croats on ethno-religious but not racial grounds and were subject to what was known as a "thirds strategy." According to this strategy, one-third of the NDH's Serbian community was to be exterminated, one-third to be deported, and one-third to be converted to Catholicism and thus assimilated to the Croat nation.²³⁹ This difference in treatment also had to do with the large size of the Serbian community, which arguably discouraged plans for total annihilation. Reportedly, at the ideological level this policy emulated an idea that originated in 1881 in Tsar Alexander III's entourage dealing with the "Jewish question" and was of a religious-theological inspiration.²⁴⁰ Other historians reject the thesis of "thirds strategy" as a historiographical myth; moreover, although they acknowledge the mass violence against the Serbs resulting in at least 300,000 death, they claim that this campaign was neither planned nor fully coordinated and thus cannot be described as a genocide.²⁴¹

In his comparative study of campaigns of mass killing in wartime Yugoslavia, Tomislav Dulić arrives at the following conclusions concerning the magnitude of destruction inflicted by the Ustaša upon the Croats, Serbs, Muslims (Bosniaks), Jews and Roma. Jews were subjected to total extermination based on racial grounds; Gypsies were subjected to a "relative

²³⁹ Goldstein, "The Independent State of Croatia in 1941," 419.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 419, citing R.S. Levy, ed., *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution* (Santa Barbara, CA; Denver; and Oxford, 2005), vol. 2, 551; and H.H. Ben-Sasson, *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 884.

²⁴¹ For a denial of the planned or genocidal nature of Ustaša's violence against Serbs, see, for example, Korb, *Im Schatten des Weltkriegs*, esp. 150–151. For a critical Serbian response, see <http://serbianna.com/analysis/archives/1950>.

destruction" similar to that inflicted on the Jewish community; Serbs suffered the highest casualties in numbers, but that amounted to a lower level of communal destruction compared to the Jews and the Gypsies; Muslims suffered a level of destruction by and large proportional with their share of the population; while predictably, Croats were underrepresented among the victims of the Ustaša terror, compared to their share of the population.²⁴² In evaluating this criminal record, Dulić argues that, while the Jews and Gypsies suffered a genocide, in the case of the Serbian community one might speak instead of an "attempted genocide," since their large numbers, their predominantly rural character and their armed resistance forced the Ustaša to re-evaluate their plans for extermination.²⁴³

II.4.3. *The Legion in Power (September 6, 1940–January 21, 1941)*

In early September 1940, after the loss of Northern Transylvania to Hungary and of Bessarabia to the Soviet Union, Carol II of Romania was forced to abdicate in favor of General Ion Antonescu, who assumed full power. In need of a political mass movement to legitimize his authoritarian rule, the general co-opted the Legion of the Archangel Michael to power. After behind-the-scenes negotiations, on September 14 Antonescu proclaimed the "National Legionary State."

The new political regime was declaratively based on three main ideological principles: it was totalitarian, national and Christian. First, the regime dismantled the last remnants of the multi-party system that survived under Carol's royal dictatorship (1938–1940), replacing it with a totalitarian, centralized structure. The state was based on a dual structure of power: the army, led by General Antonescu, controlled the executive branch of the government, while the Legion of the Archangel Michael, led by Horia Sima, represented the political "branch" of the regime. The Legion was declared "the only political movement recognized in the new state" (art. 2), while General Antonescu was "the leader of the Legionary state and the chief of the Legionary regime" (art. 3). The Legionary movement alone could provide cadres to fill positions in the political and bureaucratic apparatus. This monopoly on political life, coupled with the politicization of the administration, was aimed at building a unified totalitarian party-state structure.

Romania's elected parliament was abolished. Instead, the council of ministers led by General Antonescu was invested with full legislative powers.

²⁴² Dulić, "Mass Killing in the Independent State of Croatia, 1941–1945," 255.

²⁴³ Ibid., 274–275.

The structure of government was heavily centralized in Antonescu's hands: He was *Conducătorul statului* (the head of the state), the prime minister of the country and the leader of the army. These capacities granted him full legislative powers and complete control over the country's administrative apparatus. In practice, however, there was a clear tension in the exercise of power between the Legion on the one hand and General Antonescu and the army on the other. The former had a mainly symbolic presence in the government, with only a few ministers, but was more heavily represented in the lower branches of the administration.

The second ideological pillar in the organization of the new regime was the concept of integral nationalism. The doctrine of integral nationalism was inherited from the turn-of-the-century thinkers but invested by the Legion with new, revolutionary connotations. The main principle of integral nationalism was the ethnic nationalization of the state under the slogan "Romania for the Romanians." Its main goal was the removal of "foreigners"—of the non-ethnic Romanian members of the society, that is—from positions of power, and their replacement with ethnic Romanian elements. Although, by and large, there was a political consensus in Romanian society over nationalizing the state, the process was conceived of differently by various factions of the political elites. Traditional center-right parties, such as the National Liberal Party or the National Peasant Party, saw ethnic nationalization as the end result of a gradual process of social and political transformation implemented from above through legal-bureaucratic means, while the radical Right, represented primarily by the Legion, conceived of this process as a rapid, bottom-up campaign, through a violent grassroots revolution. The Legion's vision of rebirth and regeneration of the country entailed the purification of the political body of all foreign, "unhealthy" or "corrupt" elements through denaturalization and deportation.

The implementation of the doctrine of integral nationalism under the National-Legionary regime had two main components: 1) the denaturalization and removal of the Jews, and 2) the redistribution of their property in order to consolidate the Romanian upper- and middle-class elements of the society. These two processes of denaturalization and dispossession of the Jews cannot be understood without reference to the history of the Jewish Question in modern Romania. The Old Kingdom of Romania was the last country in Europe to emancipate its Jewish population (with decrees adopted in 1918 and 1919). Until the end of World War I, Jews were confined to the status of non-citizen residents: they lived on Romanian territory and were regarded as "subjects" of the Romanian state rather than full citizens. Their subjecthood implied numerous duties

(most importantly the duties of taxation and military service), but it did not grant full civil, economic or political rights. An elaborated system of segregation, discrimination and exploitation, made up of about 250 laws, deprived Jews of significant civil, social and economic rights. The legal justification of this system was the doctrine of the “Christian state;” the economic justification was the Jewish “domination” of certain economic activities and liberal professions and their compact geographical concentration in certain areas, most notably northern Moldavia, denounced by the contemporaries as a genuine “Jewish invasion.” This system of exclusion and discrimination was partially dismantled in 1878, when religious restrictions to naturalization were lifted under pressure from the international community, and fully abolished in 1919, under the terms of the Versailles Minority Treaty, also signed by Romania. By this international treaty, consecrated by the 1923 Constitution and the 1924 Citizenship Law, Jews were granted full and equal citizenship in interwar Romania.²⁴⁴

The postwar emancipation of Jews was bitterly contested by the radical Right, which argued for the reinstatement of the pre-World War I regime of constitutional nationalism. The revision of the citizenship of the Romanian Jews was ultimately initiated by a decree passed on January 22, 1938, under the short rule of the right-wing National Christian Party led by Octavian Goga (December 1937–February 1938). The implementation of this decree resulted in the denaturalization of 225,222 Jews, representing a share of 36.30 percent of Romania’s Jewish population, who became stateless persons. The denaturalization of Jews was followed by their exclusion from citizenship rights and their consequent loss of property rights. In August 1940, at the end of the royal dictatorship of King Carol II (1938–1940), a new system of segregation was introduced in the educational system, and two anti-Semitic decrees stripped the entire Jewish population of substantive political and civic rights, effectively “sealing off” the Jewish communities from Romanian society. With these decrees, the principle of discrimination was officially introduced in the educational system, in the army, in the cultural sphere and in political life.

The establishment of the National-Legionary State raised anti-Semitic legislation to the level of a systematic state policy. Particularly from 1940 to 1942, a substantial number of anti-Jewish laws, ministerial decisions,

²⁴⁴ On the status of Romanian Jews prior to World War I, see Constantin Iordachi, “The Unyielding Boundaries of Citizenship: The Emancipation of ‘Non-Citizens’ in Romania, 1866–1918,” *European Review of History* 8 (August 2001) 2, 157–186.

ordinances and circulars excluded the Jews from the social and economic life of the country. Jews were dispossessed of rural properties (October 5, 1940, and December 5, 1940), of urban properties (March 28, 1941), excluded from military service, subjected to mandatory forced labor (December 5, 1940), and denied access to education (October 14, 1940), while their religious and community organization was drastically reorganized (September 9, 1940, and, respectively, October 30, 1941).

The second main component of the doctrine of integral nationalism under the National-Legionary regime, closely linked with the discrimination against the Jews, was the campaign to Romanianize the economy. This process was long and arduous, for many reasons. First, the nationalization of the country's entire economy was a complex and laborious campaign, consisting of a myriad of transactions in multiple fields. Second, this large-scale operation required the creation of a bureaucratic apparatus that would register, classify, take over and redistribute industrial property to local Romanian elements or to colonists. Third, during this time the successful operation of industry continued to depend on many experienced Jewish personnel. Soon, two conflicting strategies clashed within the Legionary state: one based on a "orderly process of dispossession" and a centralized, top-down process of redistribution; and another approach, conceived as a violent, ad hoc grassroots campaign conducted by Legionary units at the local level. Overall, despite political-ideological imperatives, in practice the process of replacement took place gradually, since many invaluable Jewish managers had to be temporarily retained until they could be replaced by newly trained Romanians.

The third ideological pillar of the new regime was the doctrine of the Christian state. The new totalitarian state reorganized religious organizations, proclaiming Orthodoxy as the dominant religion in the state while also recognizing and thus accepting a number of other religious faiths. The Mosaic faith was tolerated, but its corporate rights were no longer recognized. In addition, the Legionary government wanted to promote a new relation to Orthodoxy, by imposing a new form of political religion that would incorporate but also subordinate the Orthodox Church. The campaign of institutional reorganization of the Church was, however, rather hesitant and did not lead to major results, ultimately falling into a kind of political *modus vivendi* with the Church.

Within this hybrid structure of government, the Legion's position was rather ambiguous. After two years of clandestine political activity (1938–1940), the Legion suffered from lack of coherence and organization and did not have a comprehensive program of revolutionary transformation.

Its organizational structure in cells was fitted to the clandestine, terrorist fight, but this made it difficult to coordinate the movement in power. For this reason, the Legionaries preferred symbolic ritual action and spontaneous violent revenge to legal-political transformation from above. During the 139 days of their rule, the most important acts of government were considered the rehabilitation and reburial of Codreanu and of the Legionary martyrs executed by King Carol II, and the violent elimination of the corrupt interwar political class. Soon, its disorderly actions and its claim of total and unconditional political control brought it into conflict with General Antonescu, who ousted it from power on January 23, 1941.

The project of eliminating Romania's Jews, which started under the Nation-Legionary regime, was to be completed by the Antonescu regime. During his four years in power (September 6, 1940–August 23, 1944), General (later Marshal) Ion Antonescu's policy toward the Jews underwent radical shifts. In the first part of the war, Antonescu decided to deport the Jews from Bukovina and Bessarabia, just freed from Soviet occupation, and he even initially agreed to collaborate with Germany in implementing the "Final Solution" by sending Romanian Jews to the Nazi extermination camps. After 1942, with the military situation on the Eastern Front worsening, the Romanian authorities eventually gave up on their plans of deporting the Jews from the Banat and Southern Transylvania, ultimately refusing to send them to the Nazi camps. Overall, Romania's Jewish policy demonstrated an underlying paradox: in Bessarabia, Bukovina, and on the Eastern Front, Romania conducted an anti-Semitic campaign that resulted in the death of between 280,000 to 380,000 Jews.²⁴⁵ At the

²⁴⁵ Given the impossibility of providing complete statistics, these figures are subject to debate. Yehuda Bauer estimates that up to 380,000 Romanian Jews died during World War II, out of which 260,000 were killed as a result of the actions of the Romanian authorities in Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transnistria, while 120,000 were killed by the Hungarian authorities in Northern Transylvania: Yehuda Bauer, *A History of the Holocaust*, rev. ed. (New York: Franklin Watts, 2001), 338. Dinu C. Giurescu calculates that there were 214,005 Jewish victims, of which 15,000 were from the Old Kingdom and 108,710 from Bessarabia, Northern Bukovina and the Herța region, while 90,295 victims originated from Northern Transylvania, then under Hungarian occupation. See Dinu C. Giurescu, *Romania in the Second World War: 1939–1945* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2000). Dennis Deletant argues: "Under Antonescu, Transnistria was the graveyard of between 200,000 and 250,000 Jews, and for up to 20,000 Gypsies": Dennis Deletant, "The Holocaust in Transnistria: An Overview in the Light of Recent Research," in *Moldova, Bessarabia, Transnistria*, ed. Rebecca Haynes, Occasional Papers in Romanian Studies, No. 3, School of Slavonic and East European Studies (London, 2003), 143. Radu Ioanid maintains that "at least 250,000 Jews under Romanian jurisdiction died, either on the explicit orders of Romanian officials or as a result of their criminal barbarity": Ioanid, *The Holocaust in Romania*, 289. In the

same time, despite considerable German pressure, Romania's Jews from the Old Kingdom and Southern Transylvania were not deported to Nazi death camps. As a result, about 350,000 Romanian Jews survived the war, the largest compact Jewish population to do so in Central Europe.

In sum, this short comparative overview underscores the fact that the clandestine, terrorist nature and organization of the two movements shaped their approach to violence during their rule. Once in power, the Legion and the Ustaša continued to promote their underground terrorist methods, based on the unruly violence of small units. This put them in conflict with Antonescu's regime and created tensions with Nazi Germany, respectively. While sharing the Legion's aims of Romanianizing the economy and of removing the Jews from the public and the economic sectors, Antonescu opted for a top-down process of dispossessing Jews from their rights. From this perspective, the ad hoc violent actions of the Legionary squads were not only lawless but, from Antonescu's perspective, also disruptive to the complex, long-term process of nationalizing the economy. In the NDH, although the genocidal campaign of the Ustaša regime was organized at the instigation and with the express approval of Nazi Germany, the Ustaša largely followed its own autonomous agenda of state-building through violent ethnic cleansing. Its methods of mass killing were often criticized by the Wehrmacht for bringing chaos and for fueling, rather than curtailing, partisan retaliation.²⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The interwar Balkan states were racked by sharp debates among rival ideologies over these countries' path of development; the most notable of these ideologies were national-liberalism, agrarianism, social democracy, communism, conservatism and fascism. Fascism was part and parcel of these grand debates, as fascist political ideas and movements were present, to various degrees, in all interwar Balkan states. Overall, however,

main text, I have employed the figures provided by the International Commission of the Study of Holocaust in Romania, *Raport Final*, 387–388, which are also among the higher estimates.

²⁴⁶ On the Wehrmacht's reaction to the Ustaša's mass violence and differences in Nazi Germany's and the Ustaša's understanding of modern warfare, see Jonathan E. Gumz, "Wehrmacht Perceptions of Mass Violence in Croatia, 1941–1942," *Historical Journal* 44, no. 4 (2001), 1015–1038.

fascist movements in the region remained rather marginal. Of course, it is difficult to accurately measure fascism's electoral appeal, given that elections in interwar Balkan regimes were often not free. The weakest electoral impact of fascism appears to have been registered in Greece, where a fascist organization ran in national elections only in 1935 and received a mere 505 votes.²⁴⁷ The most impressive electoral success was registered by the Iron Guard in Romania, with a share of almost 16 percent of the electorate in 1937. Overall, if one goes beyond the limited electoral impact of fascist parties and considers patterns of enrollment and membership in fascist movements in the interwar or wartime Balkans, it clearly appears that the radical solutions of national salvation proposed by fascist movements, characterized by xenophobia, anti-Semitism, paramilitarism and the drive for permanent mobilization, did trigger a noteworthy, momentous societal response. At the same time, there were also significant factors limiting the growth of fascism's mass appeal.

The relative failure of fascist movements in the Balkans to become major political forces puzzled leading students of fascism. Stanley Payne, for example, singled out "the missing mobilization of fascism in most of the Balkans prior to 1939" as "one of the notable problems in the comparative analysis of fascism."²⁴⁸ According to a retrodictive theory of fascism, Payne argued, significant fascist movements should have developed in countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece, all defeated in World War I. Yet in reality, fascism evolved into a significant mass movement only in Romania, a country that was part of the Entente's winning coalition. Since all Balkan countries were predominantly rural, the key to understanding the limited impact of fascism in the Balkans seems to lie, according to Payne, in the potential of mass mobilization in rural areas. Romania's social system was characterized by huge discrepancies, thus exhibiting great potential for political mobilization; Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece were, by comparison, more stable, egalitarian peasant economies.

For Payne, Romania's social malaise thus explains the exceptional growth of its fascist movement. Yet was there any common denominator explaining the "failure" of fascism in Bulgaria, Croatia and Greece? Although Payne does employ the expression "Balkan fascism," thus reifying fascism in the region into a distinct regional type, he ultimately

²⁴⁷ Close, "Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece," 203.

²⁴⁸ Payne, *The NDH State in Comparative Perspective*, 414–415.

acknowledges—pertinently, I believe—that “no simple individual interpretation is likely to be able to encompass all three [countries].”

In view of the comparative analysis of fascism in the Balkans advanced in this essay, the research question posed by Payne can be asked once more: How did fascism manage to become a sizable political force in Romania and, I would add, to a certain degree in Yugoslavia, which were both on the winning side of World War I, as well as in neighboring Hungary, while remaining marginal in Bulgaria, Greece or interwar Albania? In other words, how can one explain the “relative success” of fascism in Romania and Yugoslavia, as well as its “relative failure” in Albania, Bulgaria and Greece? I believe that in order to meaningfully answer this question, we need to reframe and enlarge its theoretical and methodological scope.

First, in explaining the origins of fascism, we should overcome the simplistic dichotomy between defeated and victorious countries. As noted above, many analysts argued that the emergence of fascism can be explained by nationalist resentments in defeated countries, as the massive territorial losses and pecuniary obligations imposed on them led to the radicalization of politics in the interwar period. On closer examination, however, the distinction between victorious and defeated countries is of limited analytical help. The strongest and most complex fascist movements actually developed in countries that greatly benefited from World War I territorially, namely Romania and Yugoslavia. At the same time, Bulgaria and Greece, arguably the countries that suffered the most severe setbacks of their territorial claims, failed to develop strong fascist movements. It thus becomes apparent that the origins of fascism in the Balkans could not be explained by the emergence of nationalist resentment in defeated countries. Regardless of the outcome of the war, all Balkan national ideologies developed in fact versions of “victimhood nationalism,” which could be easily instrumentalized by radical ideologies.

Second, as shown by our comparative analysis of fascism in Romania and Yugoslavia, any discussion of the origins and evolution of fascism should distance itself from the idea of a monolithic regional model and instead take into account a complex set of local as well as transnational factors. These include a) the relationship between the emergence of fascism on the one hand and the main features of the process of nation- and state-building in various Balkan countries on the other; b) interethnic tensions generated by lasting imperial legacies, social-political cleavages and processes of regional homogenization and the state crises they triggered; c) the nature of the local political regime and its evolution; d) the political

space available for fascist movements to develop; e) the nature of the existing social system and its revolutionary potential; f) the fascist movements' ideological outlook and their position within the local political spectrum; g) the relation between fascism and conservative nationalism; and h) the geopolitical position of the respective country, its territorial issues and its relations to its neighbors and to Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

Third, the fascist failure to mobilize the population should also be relativized. In some cases, this failure was due to the irrelevance of the fascist message or their lack of solutions to stringent economic issues. In other cases, the lack of fascist appeal reflected a lack of adequate leadership, as in the case of the Orjuna, which explains, along with other factors, its inability to evolve into a full-fledged fascist movement. But we can also reverse the perspective and point to the success of the ruling elites' strategies of blocking fascism in its way to power, as was the case in Yugoslavia until 1941, in Romania until 1940 and after 1941, or in interwar and wartime Bulgaria. In many cases, these strategies also entailed the open adoption of fascist ideas or styles of politics, a fascist mimicking that led to forms of para-fascist or hybridized authoritarian regimes, such as the Metaxas regime in Greece or the last stage of King Carol II's royal dictatorship in Romania.

Such a multi-factor perspective is able to shed new light on the political trajectory of fascism. For example, in Greece, the failure of fascism cannot be explained without taking into account the lack of political space for fascist parties to emerge and consolidate, due to the political polarization between the Venizelists and anti-Venizelists; the lack of "exploitable" national issues, as the war against Turkey ended in a tragedy, exhausting debates on territorial issues; the lack of pressing minority issues, given the fact that the massive population exchange between Greece and Turkey resulted in relative ethnic homogeneity, while anti-communism was championed by the Venizelists; and, finally, Nazi Germany's limited geopolitical interest in the Balkans, and Greece's territorial-political conflict with Fascist Italy, which might explain these foreign political models' lack of appeal.²⁴⁹ In Bulgaria, Stamboliyski's authoritarian regime based on agrarianism shaped the evolution of the interwar political regime, exhausting extremist societal mobilization. Moreover, Bulgarian fascists proved unsuccessful in distinguishing their political profile and ideological vision from the ruling conservative Right, an inability that explains the

²⁴⁹ Close, "Conservatism, Authoritarianism and Fascism in Greece, 1915–1945," 202–203.

fascists' failure to carve out a sufficiently large political space for itself, to mobilize followers and to build significant mass movements.

From Comparison to Shared/Entangled Histories? Fascist Studies in/on the Balkans and New Trends in Comparative History

The comparative research agenda described above poses an important historiographical question: What are the legacy, current state and prospects of comparative fascist studies in Southeastern Europe? Although it is difficult to pass generalizing value judgments, given the large and heterogeneous nature of the subject matter under discussion and the multitude of scholarly traditions involved, each of them shaped by distinct political contexts and societal concerns, several trends as well as lessons can nevertheless be discerned.

First, without minimizing the value of the scholarly contributions written on this topic since the mid-1960s, fascism in the Balkans still appears to be in need of rigorous, systematic research that would carry the field to a new stage of scholarly maturity. In Western Europe, this topic has remained relatively under-researched, due to language barriers, lack of access to primary sources, and a certain "Orientalist" manner of approaching the history of the Balkans that was prevalent during the Cold War but also survives in the post-Cold War era. In Southeastern Europe, the topic was monopolized early on by the official communist historiography, which imposed its rigid Stalinist view of fascism. Although many local historians were well equipped to deal with the topic, the overt politicization of the field set limits to how far historians could go in revising the official ideological dogma on fascism.

Second, although in the last two decades a plethora of works published in local languages have undeniably enriched our knowledge of fascism in the Balkans, these research efforts have been largely unbalanced in their analytical scope and geographical coverage, still leaving unexplored important case studies or analytical issues. In addition, despite the evident progress made in the last decade in better integrating fascism in the Balkans in a broader European perspective, local research in the field evidently suffers from under-conceptualization and a lack of up-to-date scholarly references. After decades of concerted effort, scholarship on fascism in the Balkans has yet to fully liberate itself from the political constraints and aftereffects of the former hegemonic Stalinist historiographical dogma. Although the overall Marxist conceptual framework has been largely abandoned, some of its theses, especially concerning the

mass appeal of fascism, are still present in local historiography. Moreover, Marxist theoretical perspectives were not always abandoned in favor of liberally minded, critical views on fascism, but were often replaced with uncritical, biased nationalist perspectives, which did not shy away from glorifying fascist movements as patriotic national movements with an original, unique character. In order to firmly integrate the study of fascism in Southeastern Europe within the larger discipline, local scholars need to overcome the prevailing insularity of their national historiographies, to fully absorb the main gains of the sharp debates that occurred in the last decades in the larger field of fascist studies, and to creatively adapt recent theoretical and methodological offerings to regional case studies.

Third, comparative fascist studies in the Balkans are obviously in need of a critical scholarly evaluation. The great number of fascist movements in the region and the countless forms of political entanglements and transfers to/from other fascist movements and regimes in Europe challenge historians to reconsider the theoretical and methodological foundations of their studies, by adopting new transnational perspectives. Despite the comparative nature of the topic, studies of fascism seem to remain, by and large, encapsulated within national boundaries. Back in 1979, in a critical evaluation of this field of studies, F.L. Carsten lamented, "A great deal of work remains to be done and in particular there is still a shortage of good comparative studies."²⁵⁰ Three decades after his sober evaluation, the call for comparative history remains valid, especially in Central and Southeastern Europe. While references to other fascist movements in local scholarship on fascism are not uncommon, they are either restricted to the "core" cases of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany or, at best, provide asymmetrical comparative perspectives to neighboring cases in order to better highlight the specific features or "uniqueness" of the particular movement being examined.

It is my conviction that studies on fascism in Southeastern Europe are able to provide a privileged site for transnational interaction and cross-fertilization among various strands of local and external scholarship. On the one hand, the field is scrutinized by numerous national historiographies in the region; in the post-1989 environment, their joint effort occasions fruitful exchanges and a renewed regional cooperation, potentially leading to new comparative insights. On the other hand, studies on fascism in the Balkans, and in Central and Eastern Europe in general, might lead

²⁵⁰ F.L. Carsten, "Interpretations of Fascism," in *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, ed. Laqueur, 431.

to a greater research convergence in fascist studies. It is well known that German and French studies on fascism have developed in relative isolation from the Anglo-Saxon body of scholarship; recent attempts at fostering a cross-national dialogue have met with only limited success. In view of the rich traditions of area studies focusing on the Balkans or on East-Central Europe, in general—engaging mostly Soviet/Russian, French, British, American, German and Israeli scholars—the study of fascism in these regions might function as a meeting point of various scholarly approaches and traditions, further facilitating research convergence in fascist studies.

Fourth, studies on fascism in the Balkans might lead to a change of emphasis in the current research agenda in the field of comparative fascism. As is well known, in approaching historical fascism, we need to differentiate between several analytical levels, defining fascism as an ideology, a set of movements and a set of regimes, while being aware that each analytical level of the ideology/movement/regime triad necessitates different methods and research questions. Ever since the 1930s, the Marxist dogma on fascism focused almost exclusively on the nature of fascist regimes, largely ignoring the crystallization of fascist ideology and the emergence of genuine fascist mass movements. Back in the early 1990s, in order to overcome the conceptual confusion in the field and to overcome the limitations of the prevailing Marxist approach, a major recommendation of the “new consensus” platform was to concentrate research on the issue of defining the fascist ideological minimum. To this end, in the last two decades, scholarship on fascism has mainly employed a Weberian ideal-type research methodology, focusing, often in a reductive, self-referential and thus repetitive way, on providing the most adequate and concise definition of “generic fascism,” a beauty contest of sorts over the issue of brevity or conciseness. In the process, theoretical debates on fascism were often divorced from empirical research; the definition of fascism became an aim in itself rather than a research tool.

I regard this almost-exclusive focus on defining the fascist ideological minimum as too reductive. True, an ideal-type definition of the fascist ideology is a necessary instrument of comparison, but it is certainly not sufficient for providing a comprehensive, full-fledged analysis of historical fascism. This self-limitation imposed upon research on fascism was arguably useful in the 1990s but no longer corresponds to the current research stage in fascist studies, marked by a flurry of historical perspectives on a variety of case studies in East and West alike, informed by abundant and previously unavailable archival evidence. Contrasting historical case studies with an ideal-type definition of “generic” fascism is only one possible

form of comparison in fascist studies, with the specific aim of enabling researchers to differentiate genuine fascist movements from non-fascist ones. But in order to study fascist movements and regimes within their own category, other forms of inter-fascist comparisons should be employed, at various analytical, geographical or temporal levels. Depending on the analytical goals set by researchers, the outcome of these can also be different. Comparative analyses of fascism can result in descriptive definitions of interwar historical fascism, general theories identifying the structural conditions or mutual causation for the emergence and evolution of fascist movements, or typologies of existing fascist movements and regimes based on their similarities and differences. In addition, comparison can be diachronic, tracing the origins and evolution of certain processes in time, such as the roots of the fascist ideology, or synchronic, examining contemporary cases of fascism or cases across different eras.

Fifth, fascist movements and regimes should be better contextualized, by inserting them into the larger spectrum of extreme right-wing politics and exploring their features against the background of the existing political systems. In their effort to provide accurate definitions of fascism, ideal-typical approaches tend to neatly differentiate and thus isolate fascist movements from the non-fascist radical Right. While this is an important differentiation at the analytical level, the historical reality was that fascist movements and the non-fascist radical Right developed in a tight entanglement marked by both cooperation and conflict. This was particularly the case in the Balkans, where there were traditionally a plethora of nationalist movements of various ideological orientations. These movements were in a permanent political flux; their dynamism, marked by evolutions or involutions and shifting political-ideological positions, cannot be fully captured by static ideal-type definitions.

Sixth, in order to understand fascism in all its facets, one needs to employ an interdisciplinary approach, combining economic with social approaches and political with cultural and anthropological approaches. For example, the study of ideology is a question of intellectual history, but also of conceptual history; the organization of fascist movements can be studied using the tools of sociology, anthropology or social history; the electoral evolution of fascism and its place in the political system is a question of political history that can be studied using political-science approaches; international entanglements among fascist movements and regimes are a matter of international studies and can be studied using the tools of comparative history, the history of transfers and entanglements. Transnational approaches, in particular, are able to fundamentally alter

our perception of the cross-history of fascism. They challenge historians to renounce their compartmentalization of fascist movements in national capsules evolving along parallel tracks, forcing them to rethink their unit of analysis at a pan-European or even global level. In this way, historians are able to question well-established stereotypes on the genesis and dissemination of fascist ideology.²⁵¹

In their efforts to embrace transnational perspectives more fully, comparative fascist studies might find inspiration in recent approaches to comparative history, which go beyond a mechanical juxtaposition in terms of similarities and differences among isolated, neatly differentiated, and internally stable national units. They focus instead on new units of comparison, emphasizing their multiple entanglements and reciprocal influences. In fascist studies, such a method would entail designing new, sub- or supra-national units of research and focusing mainly on transnational relations between fascist movements and regimes rather than on "national" case studies. The assumption informing such a genuinely transnational approach is that the evolution of fascist movements and regimes cannot be studied in isolation, as they constantly influenced each other. Much has been written about the intertwined relationship and mutual impact of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, as well as on the strong influence they exercised on smaller countries. This angle of research can and should be extended to mutual or multilateral influences among fascist movements and regimes at the regional and European level.

Overall, this new agenda prompts researchers to rethink their units of analysis, moving not only away from "monolithic" regional types of fascism but also beyond the idea of the existence of "national" types of fascism. Surely, this does not mean that local monographs or single case studies

²⁵¹ Michael Kellogg, for example, highlighted the major influence exerted by White émigrés on the ideological evolution of Nazism. Figures such as Lieutenant Max von Scheubner-Richter, General Vladimir Biskupskii, Colonel Ivan Poltavets-Ostranitsa, Lieutenant Piotr Shabelskii-Bork, Colonel Fedor Vinberg, and particularly, Alfred Rosenberg made crucial contributions to National Socialism, shaping Hitler's political, military and ideological views. On this basis, he goes so far as to argue that National Socialism was not a specifically German phenomenon but the end result of a complex interaction and cooperation between the German National Socialist movement on the one hand and the anti-Bolshevik, anti-Semitic Russian White émigrés on the other. See Michael Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Emigrés and the Making of National Socialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). On the same topic, see Robert Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Emigrés in Germany, 1881–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972); and Karl Schlögel, ed., *Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941: Leben im europäischen Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie, 1995).

are obsolete. On the contrary, monographs on single case studies play an important role, since they enrich our factual knowledge, making possible informed large-scale comparative studies. The pan-European comparative research on fascism needs to be both universalizing and particularizing. Such an approach would illuminate the international character of fascism but would also shed light on the wider issues relevant to the study of political transfers in interwar Europe, such as the role played by new forms of propaganda, the novel ways in which ideas and printed artifacts circulated, and the role of mediators in enabling political and institutional transfers.

This new research agenda would not simply mean extending the existing theoretical framework of generic fascism to previously unexplored regions but would entail the development of new transnational perspectives on fascism. It would necessitate the renunciation of teleological comparative perspectives still prevalent in Cold War-type scholarship, which takes Western Europe as a measuring stick and normatively evaluates other historical case studies only by means of negative comparisons (for instance, what was missing, or what “went wrong” in non-Western regions, as compared to the Western “normative” development). Instead of treating fascist movements and regimes in these regions as carbon copies of their “genuine” Western counterparts, scholars should instead acknowledge that there were multiple laboratories for the elaboration of fascist ideology in interwar politics, and that these generated, almost simultaneously, radical political experiments in East and West alike. The multiple relations among these ideological laboratories cannot simply be studied using the tools of comparative history; they must also be examined by exploring their entanglements, multiple cross-transfers, and intertwined developments. The fusion of local factors and external influences in particular forms of ideological syncretism should be treated as a paramount example of a transnational cross-fertilization of *illiberal* ideas and practices, rather than being approached in terms of a “unilateral” transfer from the Western political core to the non-Western periphery.

COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM IN THE BALKANS: MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE OR MUTUAL ATTRACTION?

Tchavdar Marinov and Alexander Vezenkov

For a long time, communist parties were regarded as anti-national organizations, and this perception was largely exploited by their critics. It is true that communism was a universalistic project and communists were openly critical toward “chauvinism.” And compared to other political movements of the first half of the twentieth century, communism was certainly less “nationalistic.” That could be considered an advantage, but most often the communist parties’ alleged lack of nationalism was and is still seen as something negative. The fact that communists usually rejected these “accusations” and tried to prove that they were in fact patriots is also revealing. In many cases that was not just propaganda; in the long run communist parties, especially those in power, demonstrated genuine nationalism.

The fall of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe was paralleled by the rise of nationalism, of which the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia was the most important example. This impression was strengthened by the tensions between certain neighboring former communist states (such as Romania and Hungary), although these were clearly visible before 1989 as well. There were also disturbing tensions within several countries with large minorities, which were also paralleled by ethnic voting (Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia; later Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and others). The outburst of post-communist nationalism was an unpleasant surprise and needed explanation. Many analysts started to speak of the “return” of a nationalism that was “frozen” for several decades under communist rule; the metaphor of communism as a “refrigerator” became widely used.¹ This interpretation was related to the old perception of the communist parties and communist regimes as “anti-national.”

¹ See, for example, Dan Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul: ideologie cominternistă și iredentism bulgar: 1919–1940* (Bucharest: Institutul național pentru studiul totalitarismului, 2001), 17; Evgeniya Ivanova, *Balkanite: săzhitelstvo na vekovete. Izsledvane vărhu (ne)săstoyavaneto na balkanskata modernost* (Sofia: NBU, 2005), 226, 319.

Undoubtedly nationalism became more visible after 1989, for the obvious reason that previously, under dictatorship, popular feelings and movements had been managed and controlled. But already on the eve of the big changes, more attentive scholars rightly pointed out that it was not simply the “old nationalism” re-emerging. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was among the first to discuss the manifestations of post-communist nationalism, wrote that “communism in fact intensified popular nationalist passions. It produced a political culture imbued with intolerance, self-righteousness, rejection of social compromise and a massive inclination toward self-glorifying oversimplification. On the level of belief, dogmatic communism thus fused with and even reinforced intolerant nationalism.”² Or as Katherine Verdery put it, “the monolithic Party-state produced a monolithic Nation.”³

Nationalism was not simply “rehabilitated”; it was substantially transformed by the communist regimes and communist outlook. “Communist nationalism” and “nationalism after communism” were very different from the nationalisms that existed before communist rule. Of course the old problems with minorities and neighbors still existed, but at the same time late communist (and post-communist) nationalism was closely related to the etatism, collectivism and autarchy of the existing regime; these characteristics of late communism are also characteristics of its nationalism. One influential factor was the concept of national unity that was promoted by authoritarian and fascist parties in the interwar period but adopted and further developed by the communist regimes. This concept classified the very existence of and competition between political parties as “division of the nation.” The ethnic voting after 1990—although not a direct result of the communist regime—was fueled by the ethnic encapsulation both of minorities and the majority under the respective communist regime. The fact that former communist parties successfully used nationalist rhetoric and attracted a substantial part of the nationalist vote after 1989 could be interpreted not only as a cynical about-face but also as a logical result of their longer evolution toward nationalism. The same is true of the communist background of many post-1989 ultra-nationalists and their respective political formations.

² Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Post-Communist Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 5 (1989), 2.

³ Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 315.

The idea that communism and nationalism were incompatible is still popular, but it is hardly accepted in academic circles. Political and historical studies provide sufficient evidence that communism fused with nationalism in many ways, although opinions differ about when and how the various communist parties adopted nationalist views and policies. At least nationalism in the post-Stalinist period is a widely recognized phenomenon, both as “national communism” (in Yugoslavia, Albania and Romania) and as “communist nationalism” (in Bulgaria). New studies go further back in the interwar period and discuss the use of nationalism by the communist parties at the time of the so-called “popular fronts” after 1935, as well as the appeal by the communist parties to the nationalist aspirations of the so-called “oppressed nationalities” as far back as the 1920s.

Here we will try to analyze the long and meandering relationship between communism and nationalism in the case of the Balkan communist parties and states. Focusing on the region allows us to take into account some of the most prominent cases of communist regimes known as “national communism” as well as some impressive examples of “communist nationalism.” At the same time we do not consider the turn towards nationalism as something specific to the Balkan communist parties. In fact the fusion between communism and nationalism was a general trend, and in many cases, especially from the 1920s to the 1940s, it resulted from instructions from Moscow. We will examine critically the much-discussed question of when the communist parties in the region began their “turn” toward nationalism. Instead of searching for a “turning point” from dogmatic communism to nationalism, we wish to analyze the long process by which communism and nationalism were combined. At the same time we will also examine the entanglement between the different cases—the amalgamation of communism and nationalism was not a process that developed in a given communist party without interaction with the communist movement in general and the nationalism of other, especially neighboring, parties.

COMMUNIST REGIMES AND NATIONALISM—DIFFERENT TRAJECTORIES AND NUMEROUS INTERSECTIONS

The problems addressed in this study are frequently analyzed within the conceptual framework of “national communism.” The concept of “national communism” is not interchangeable with nor restricted to nationalism, but they are interrelated because “national communism” was seen primarily as a reaction to the previously promoted “internationalism” and

restrictions imposed from Moscow. Political analysts during the Cold War carefully examined the signs of independence demonstrated by communist regimes, and Tito's Yugoslavia, Enver Hoxha's Albania and Ceaușescu's Romania are among the most discussed cases. Thus most of the communist regimes in the Balkans became notorious as examples of "national communism" in power. Let us briefly recap the generally accepted views before discussing their accuracy and looking for explanations.

Yugoslavia was a special case not only at the regional level but even for the communist movement as a whole. It emancipated itself from Moscow at a very early stage, as became visible after the break between Tito and Stalin in 1948. This break did not result from a desire to create some "original" form of socialism, but it had ideological implications by definition. Until that moment communism had meant only "Soviet communism," and for the first time this rule was challenged.⁴ Shortly afterwards the regime tried to propose its own model of socialism based on self-management—that is, something fundamentally different from the centralist and etatist model of Stalin and the USSR. Internationally Yugoslavia was one of the founders and a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement (the first conference of the movement was held in Belgrade in 1961, and Josip Broz Tito became its first secretary general). Yugoslavia was also a special case because of its federative structure, which was designed to pacify and combine the national aspirations of several Slavic nations but later actually became the incubator of their nationalisms. As a result the most successful communist regime in Eastern Europe ended amidst a dramatic ethnic conflict.

Communist Albania became known both for its orthodox adherence to Stalinism and for its seclusion from the rest of the world. It broke relations with the Soviet Union in 1960–1961 and became the stronghold of Stalinist orthodoxy in Eastern Europe (and a model for some small Stalinist parties abroad), which also led to the peculiar alliance with China in the 1960s and early 1970s. At the same time Enver Hoxha's regime also remained Stalinist in its domestic policies, and purged party functionaries were often executed. Unlike Yugoslavia, the Albanian regime tended to close itself off almost completely from the outside world, particularly after the 1978 break with China. This self-isolation made Albania notorious and at the same time doomed it to remain the least-known and least-studied Eastern European country.

⁴ Richard C. Gripp, "Ten Years of National Communism: 1948–1958," *Western Political Quarterly* 13 (1960), 937.

Romanian emancipation from Soviet tutelage was smoother and did not end in a complete break, despite the fact that at times the leadership in Bucharest was extremely vocal. The emancipation process started gradually in the mid-1950s, especially after Soviet troops left Romanian territory in 1958. The Sino-Soviet split was an occasion for the Romanian leadership to assert its own independence vis-à-vis the USSR. The first steps were taken under Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, but the process culminated under his successor Nicolae Ceaușescu (who refused to join in, and publicly condemned, the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia). His rule started as “liberal,” yet ended as the most frequently cited example of oppressive and conservative communist dictatorship; the opening to the West gave way to political isolation and a tendency toward autarky. In parallel the regime was becoming more and more nationalist, with the primary rhetorical targets being the Soviet Union/Russia (tacitly) and Hungary and the Hungarian minority in Transylvania (more openly).

In the region only Bulgaria remained known as “the most faithful ally” of the Soviet Union. On two occasions—in 1963 and 1973—the first secretary of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), Todor Zhivkov, even proposed making his country the sixteenth republic of the USSR. Though such a move was not feasible, this gesture demonstrated Zhivkov’s complete loyalty to Moscow, as well as his barely concealed agenda to profit as much as possible from closer cooperation with the Soviet Union. Domestically, the regime in Sofia gradually developed an openly nationalistic policy against its Muslim and Turkish minorities and went much further in this direction than any other Eastern European communist regime.

“National communism” was characterized primarily by independence from Moscow and was justified not only by diverging (national and/or state) interests but also by different ideological interpretations. The independence of the individual communist countries produced different types of regimes, which sometimes makes the use of one single category problematic. Vladimir Tismăneanu even differentiates between “national communism” as a “innovative, flexible and tolerant” reaction to Soviet political and ideological domination and “national Stalinism” as “reactionary and self-centered” phenomenon, although he agreed that the two could coexist in practice and “one and the same leader may at some times be national communist and at others move toward national Stalinism.”⁵ In the long run the independent national line by the communist parties always had

⁵ Vladimir Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 32–33.

certain negative effects. Even in Yugoslavia the peaceful decentralization negotiated for several decades ended with extreme nationalists in power in some of the republics, war and ethnic cleansing.

In fact, during the post-Stalinist period all communist regimes gradually became more openly nationalistic, especially regarding their policy on minorities and to a certain extent the discourse about neighboring states. Some scholars see these changes as marking the turn from internationalism toward nationalism. The nationalist orientation was not only the result of specific decisions—closed borders also played an important role in shaping the nationalist thinking of the late communist period. On the one hand, because borders could not be politically challenged, more attention was paid to ideological mobilization within the nation-state. That included the discourses on national history and national traditions, but the conditions were also favorable for the population to internalize them. On the other hand, contacts across borders were reduced. The result was a self-centered and self-sufficient nationalist discourse and outlook, one that ignored the neighbors more often than it attacked them. Communist nationalism became a self-sufficient phenomenon, a kind of “closed-borders nationalism.”

All studies on “national communism”/“communist nationalism” note the rewriting of the national past during the communist regime.⁶ National history “from the earliest days to the present” was an earlier invention, but the genre flourished in all communist countries. The history of a given communist regime was presented as part of the respective nation’s history, and the regime’s establishment was portrayed as the culmination of centuries of struggle for national freedom and social equality. Even in countries where the communist regime was established exclusively as a result of the presence of the Soviet army, its role was purposely downplayed. The reinvention was not limited to historical studies; great effort was devoted to “national traditions” such as “national cuisine,” “national architecture” and “national dress.”⁷ What is also important is that these

⁶ For instance, Robert King, *A History of the Romanian Communist Party* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 120–134; Katherine Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism: Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceaușescu’s Romania* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1991), 215 ff; Lucian Boia, *Istorie și mit în conștiința românească* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997) 69–82; Bogdan Iacob: “Stalinism, Historians, and the Nation: History-Production under Communism in Romania (1955–1966),” PhD diss., Central European University, 2011.

⁷ *V tãrsene na bãlgarskoto. Mrezhi na natsionalna intimnost, XIX–XXI vek*, ed. Stefan Detchev (Sofia: Institut za izsledvane na izkustvata, 2010).

interpretations were widely shared in the academic milieu and internalized by segments of the wider population.

At first glance it looks as if every regime had a particular story of its own, but their different trajectories intersected at numerous points, and it is important to emphasize that in most cases their roots were in the interwar period and World War II. This was due primarily, and most obviously, to bilateral tensions and conflicts inherited from the past. But it also resulted from the power constellation in the postwar world—the division into capitalist and communist blocs and the competition within the communist camp.

Communist states inherited almost intact the whole set of minority and inter-state tensions from the interwar period, which led to mirrored mutually conditioned reactions of the regimes in neighboring countries. During the interwar period, communist parties were preoccupied with minority issues, but once in power they started to approach the problem differently—in fact, more and more like the previous regime had. The fact that the communist takeover took place at the end of a war was also important, because the newly established regimes almost immediately faced problems related to the revision/preservation of state borders and negotiations over reparations. Later on the communist leaderships resorted more and more often to the old responses to the old problems, and the general picture was also very similar, simply because the ethno-political map of the postwar Balkans was almost identical to that of the interwar period. As a result Bulgarian communists inherited the obsession with the numerous and compact Turkish minority within the country and the highly emotional dispute over Macedonia. Likewise, Romanian nationalism, unable to challenge the USSR over Bessarabia, concentrated on past Hungarian political domination and on the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. The sizable Albanian population in Yugoslavia remained a major problem for both countries. All of these cases are well-known and well-researched.

Two major changes should be mentioned. The first and most important of these was the transformation of Yugoslavia into a federal state. Initially communist Yugoslavia was a centralized state, but later the republics developed into autonomous units of a loose confederation. That had enormous implications for the peoples of Yugoslavia itself but also influenced the way in which the neighboring communist countries addressed the minority issues of their compatriots. Albanian interests were concentrated mostly on the Albanian-dominated autonomous province of Kosovo, although Albanian minorities in Macedonia, Montenegro

and Serbia were not forgotten. Bulgaria adopted a different line toward its compatriots in Serbia in the so-called “Western Outlands” (*Zapadni pokraynini*) and Macedonia, which in fact institutionalized the policy of the interwar period, when the Bulgarian Communist Party adopted different agendas regarding the two regions and their inhabitants. The second important difference from the interwar period was the agreement between Romania and Bulgaria on Dobrudja (September 1940) and the population exchange that followed. As a result both countries concentrated on other regional controversies and minority problems.

The coalescing of communist and capitalist blocs in Europe had a significant impact on the formation of national agendas. Starting from late 1944, communist leaderships in power adopted different approaches toward countries in the Soviet zone and those controlled by the Western allies. They tended to resolve in a friendly manner disputes with neighboring countries dominated by communists, and they took a hard line toward countries under Western influence. Thus the newly established communist government in Albania engaged in a diplomatic conflict with Greece because the latter claimed Northern Epirus. This dispute helped the new regime in Tirana to distract its citizens from the problem of Kosovo, which, after the war, remained in Yugoslavia. Bulgaria was able to pursue freely an anti-Turkish policy that was in perfect harmony with the Soviet line at that time. In fact, as early as September 1944, the Soviet army was positioned on the Bulgarian-Turkish border in order to exert pressure during the following months. Bulgaria also took a different approach to the problems with the two neighbor states from the anti-Nazi coalition that endured occupation by Bulgarian troops—it was more flexible and friendly with communist-led Yugoslavia than with British-controlled Greece.

The ups and downs of the Cold War also influenced those communist regimes that opted for an independent policy from Moscow. Such regimes found conditions to be easier in periods of tension between the two superpowers, but during the *détente* era, their value to either side diminished. Thus Yugoslavia gained substantial Western support in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and Ceaușescu achieved the same in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The relationship of the individual regimes with Moscow was another important factor. The use of nationalism during the Stalinist period depended directly on Soviet priorities—it oscillated as a result of changing directives from Moscow. But even after 1956 some “national communist” regimes had to take into account the priorities of the neighboring

superpower. For instance, the Romanian leadership under Ceaușescu clearly demonstrated that it would not go against the vital interests of the USSR in order to avoid being targeted for intervention as Hungary and Czechoslovakia were. One other factor provided better conditions for “national communism” in two countries of the region. From a Soviet perspective the Balkans were not as important as the immediate neighbors on the USSR’s western border. Moscow more easily accepted Yugoslavia’s and later Albania’s dissidence, which was not the case for Hungary and Czechoslovakia and, despite all concessions, could not be the case for Poland and Romania. This approach might have been anachronistic for the second half of the twentieth century, when the superpowers possessed nuclear arms, but before, during and after World War II, Stalin clearly demonstrated that control over the immediate neighbors was his top priority.

Bulgaria adopted a nationalist policy without openly challenging the leadership in the Kremlin. That resulted not only from the docility of the leadership in Sofia but also from the coincidence of interests of the superpower and the smaller ally. First, unlike countries bordering the USSR such as Romania or Poland, Bulgaria had no territorial conflicts with Moscow. Second, Soviet/Russian support appeared to be vital for Bulgaria’s regime and society, which were becoming more and more anti-Turkish. In addition the pro-Soviet line was usually helpful in relations with the two other neighboring communist countries—Yugoslavia after 1948 and Romania after the early 1960s. In most cases Bulgarian communist leaders were able to follow a nationalist line that was compatible with Soviet tutelage. The idea of independence from the USSR was not without appeal for certain strata in Bulgaria—Tito and at times even Ceaușescu enjoyed some popularity among Bulgarians for their independent policy vis-à-vis the USSR. Bulgarian cultural policy in the 1970s also had some anti-Russian overtones, especially in historical research (controversies over the origin of the Cyrillic alphabet, the evaluation of Bulgarian contributions to the Slavic medieval culture, and the debate over the Macedonian language and national identity). That was the way the Bulgarian intellectual elites dealt with their inferiority complex concerning not only Soviet political domination but also the powerful Russian cultural influence. Still, it was not enough to nurture a nationalist trend in the Communist Party that could change the policy line.

The Bulgarian case clearly demonstrates that this turn toward nationalism was not restricted to “dissident” regimes. Actually, starting from the late 1950s, the policy on the “national question” changed in communist

countries independently of whether and to what extent they remained faithful to Moscow—for example, the policy toward minorities hardened in both Bulgaria and Romania. That was seen as part of a relative emancipation from the tradition of communist internationalism, although similar policies existed at the same time in the Soviet Union itself.⁸

The confrontation of the two blocs did not prevent competition within each of them, and in some cases this competition escalated into open conflict. “Ideological” conflicts were often instrumentalized by individual communist regimes for pragmatic goals. Certain communist leaderships’ accusations of “revisionism” were a convenient tactic to gain the support of the USSR against the respective, usually neighboring, country. Thus the Bulgarian and the Albanian leaderships were the first in 1948 to join the accusations against Yugoslavia, not only in order to demonstrate loyalty to Stalin but also to strengthen their position against their more powerful and influential neighbor. In a similar way the party leadership in Sofia chose to remain as close as possible to the Muscovite line, while from the 1960s onwards Romanian communist leaders asserted their independence. A similar case was the invasion in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Romania refused to participate, and Albania, which was still formally a member of the Warsaw Pact, left the organization. The leaderships in both countries did not support in any way the liberalization of the Prague Spring, but for them it was more important to preserve the principle of independence of the individual socialist countries.

At later stages tensions between neighboring socialist countries often became more important than the rivalry of “socialist” and “capitalist” countries. Thus Bulgaria established long-term friendly relations with Greece, while controversies with Yugoslavia over Macedonia remained more heated; Yugoslavia itself established closer ties with Greece. Similarly, Enver Hoxha demonstrated a certain willingness to establish normal relations with Greece while keeping tensions with Yugoslavia high.

It should be mentioned that the independent “national” orientations of the communist regimes were often entangled with power competition within the respective party leaderships. Leaders like Ceaușescu employed a national line to strengthen their position internally, while Zhivkov used close collaboration with the leadership in Moscow for the very same purpose. In 1948 Enver Hoxha used the Tito-Stalin conflict not only to achieve

⁸ See, for instance, Marin Pundeff, “Nationalism and Communism in Bulgaria,” *Südost-Forschungen* 29 (1970), 128–170.

independence from Belgrade but also to remove, prosecute and execute his rivals in the party leadership, led by Koçi Xoxe. A comparison between the communist countries demonstrates that they often addressed similar problems in a completely different way, but the choices were not unconnected. Competition for resources in COMECON in some cases ended with conflicts with the USSR (as it did for Romania and Albania) or, conversely, with even closer ties with Moscow in order to obtain its support (as happened with Bulgaria). Obviously the Bulgarian strategy could work only because Moscow lost its patience with dissident neighboring countries and thus rewarded the regime in Sofia with more investment.

In many cases it is difficult to trace a line between “communist” and “nationalist” policies, because many of them actually fell into both categories. A good example is Enver Hoxha’s Albania, which was rightly seen as Stalinist (it was dubbed “the Red monastery”) and at the same time very nationalist. Some analysts went so far as to see the core of Hoxha’s ideology solely in nineteenth-century Albanian nationalism,⁹ but the regime followed orthodox communist policies in many domains, especially in the economic field. Ideological disputes with other communist countries often reflected internal priorities and practical considerations. This explains the firm critiques of Enver Hoxha against the policies of self-management and decentralization in Yugoslavia. On the one hand, the Albanian leadership had reason to be pleased with the decentralization of the late 1960s and 1970s, because it gave much more power to Albanians in Kosovo. On the other hand, the decentralization was exactly the opposite of both the Stalinist concept and practice of socialist governance and of what the leadership in Tirana wanted to achieve in Albania itself—a completely centralized and homogenized country.¹⁰ The proclamation of Albania as an atheist state could be seen as a radical communist measure, but it was also part of the policy of national unification, aiming to erase the differences between Sunni Muslims, Bektashi Muslims, Orthodox Christians and Catholics.

One should not overestimate the nationalist ingredients in the official ideology of communist regimes. In many regards they tried to keep in line with “Marxist-Leninist[-Stalinist]” ideology, which implied a certain tolerance toward people of different nationality. Actually, the internationalist

⁹ Bernhard Tönnies, *Sonderfall Albanien. Enver Hoxhas “eigener Weg” und die historischen Ursprünge seiner Ideologie* (Munich: R. Oldenburg, 1980).

¹⁰ Enver Hoxha, *Yugoslav “Self-Administration”: A Capitalist Theory and Practice* (Tirana: 8 Nëntori, 1978).

rhetoric of the regime made nationalism even more fashionable among its critics. As a result communist regimes and communist societies became profoundly nationalistic without publicly admitting it. "Nationalism under communism" in many respects was an unexpected but inevitable by-product of decades-long policies of mass mobilization in relatively closed and isolated national states. The nationalist regimes in the late 1980s were at the same time among the most dogmatic followers of the communist doctrine. Symptomatic in this regard is the refusal of the leaderships in Bucharest and Tirana to introduce economic reforms.

Some aberrations of "national communism" also had their ideological background in orthodox communism. In the late 1980s Ceaușescu's regime attracted renewed criticism abroad because of its policy of "systematization"—the plans to erase small villages by resettling their population in small towns, as well as the arbitrary large-scale reconstruction of many large cities, primarily the capital, Bucharest. The question was raised mainly from the Hungarian side, as the project concerned the Hungarian minority in Transylvania and some publications at that time depicted the project for rural systematization in Romania as only a pretext for assimilation of the Hungarian and German minorities.¹¹ In fact the program had its roots in socialist spatial planning, which regarded small settlements (under 3,000 inhabitants) as economically nonviable, and that view was shared by planning authorities in all communist countries, including Romania and Hungary. The necessity of redistributing the population of small villages in bigger settlements was a basic tenet of Hungarian settlement policy until the 1960s.¹²

One question that remains controversial concerns when nationalist policies actually began. Initially "national communism" was seen as an "anti-Stalinist" phenomenon (in the Yugoslav case) and in all other cases as a "post-Stalinist" phenomenon, although some signs of independent behavior also appeared on earlier occasions. It is true that the death of Stalin set off major changes across the board. The prolonged transition period in the Kremlin allowed the communist leaders in most other countries to strengthen their own position, although that came only after

¹¹ Denis Deletant, *România sub regimul comunist* (Bucharest: Fundația Academia Civică, 1997) 185–189; John R. Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe: A Century of War and Transition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 245.

¹² Gyula Belényi, *Az Alföldi városok és a településpolitika (1945–1963)* (Szeged: Csongrád Megyei Levéltár, 1996), 95–97; György Enyedi, "Településpolitika a 'fejlett' szocializmusban," *Historia* 19, nos. 9–10 (1997), 33.

internal struggles. At the same time China emerged as an important independent force in the communist world, which allowed socialist countries either to balance between Moscow and Beijing (as Romania did in the early 1960s) or to opt for a new patron (as Albania did at the same time). Moscow redefined the limits of autonomy, showing clearly that it would not tolerate full independence but was open to more concessions to individual communist parties.¹³ This more flexible attitude allowed the Soviet satellites to follow more independent domestic and even foreign policies, but it also permitted at least partial reconciliation with Yugoslavia.

Although the independent line (including nationalist dimensions) was at least more visible in the post-Stalinist period, the main figures of national communism include leaders of the Stalinist period who remained in power (such as Enver Hoxha and Gheorge Gheorgiu-Dej). The “new leaders,” such as Zhivkov in Bulgaria and later Ceaușescu in Romania, also did not appear at the top *ex nihilo* and made their careers during the Stalinist period. But that also shows to what extent nationalism was part of the thinking of communist leaders of the Stalinist period, although they were not always allowed to demonstrate it or to formulate their policies according to it.

During the later decades of the communist regimes, some older nationalists (including some former fascists) became supporters of the communist regime, because they recognized nationalist trends in the official policy and discourse. That was symptomatic of the change in communist policy, but it is worth mentioning that some politicians from the extreme right joined the communists even earlier on patriotic grounds: such as Omer Nishani in Albania, Dimo Kazasov and Kimon Georgiev in Bulgaria and Boleslaw Piasecki in Poland. Shortly after assuming power, the communist authorities tried to convert at least some of the supporters of the *ancien régime* by convincing them that they should serve their country regardless of what kind of government was in power.

The “nationalist policy” toward minorities of the late 1950s also had its equivalents in the 1940s. For example, in Bulgaria the communist leadership did not allow the Turks to create their own cultural organization in the framework of the Fatherland Front (while other minorities were urged to create such organizations); this was due primarily to fears of Turkish interference in Bulgarian affairs. At the same time this anti-Turkish

¹³ H. Gordon Skilling, “National Communism in Eastern Europe since the 22nd Congress,” *Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science* 30 (1964), 313, 319.

attitude reflected instructions from Moscow, because at exactly that time (late 1944–early 1945) the Soviet leadership was planning to press Turkey for territorial concessions in the Caucasus. Georgi Dimitrov announced the forced removal of the Turks and Muslims from border regions in January 1948.¹⁴

In the case of Yugoslav communists, the break with Moscow came at a very early stage, but even in this case the roots of their independence lay further back. Those origins are to be found in the communist-dominated resistance movement during World War II, which gave Tito and his followers an independent power base as well as enough self-confidence to disregard some instructions coming from the Kremlin. In fact the tensions were initially between the radicalism of the Yugoslav leaders and the more moderate line suggested by Stalin. The regime in newly established Yugoslavia was more “Soviet” than Moscow was advising, mostly because it did not want to alarm the Western Allies with open Sovietization and Bolshevization. Only at a later stage, sometime after the break, was a “Yugoslav way” to socialism formulated and Tito’s dissidence ideologically legitimized. This again proved that ideology was very important and the idea of state/national sovereignty was not sufficient to legitimize independence vis-à-vis the USSR.

Albanian dissidence is usually dated back only to 1960–1961. It is also widely accepted that the first tensions appeared in 1955 when Khrushchev visited Belgrade in order to normalize relations with Tito, but the crisis in Soviet-Yugoslav relations after the suppression of the Hungarian uprising (October–November 1956) prolonged the process. In fact the turning point for Albania was 1948 and came as an opportunistic reaction to the Stalin-Tito conflict. It must be remembered that the Albanian Communist Party was dependent not on Moscow directly, but on the Yugoslav Communist Party. The very creation of the Albanian Communist Party (on November 8, 1941) resulted from preparations and help by Yugoslav communists. The alliance with the Soviet Union after 1948 was an allegiance to a remote power, similar to the pro-China policy from 1960 until 1977–1978. The relationship with China deteriorated in exactly the same way as that with the USSR—at a time when China started to seek better relations with Yugoslavia in order to form an anti-Soviet bloc with Yugoslavia and Romania in the early 1970s. Even before the break with China, Enver Hoxha’s reaction

¹⁴ Ulrich Büchsenstschütz, *Maltsinstvenata politika v Bălgaria. Politikata na BKP kăm evrei, romi, pomatsi i turtsi, 1944–1989* (Sofia: IMIR, 2000), 127.

was to normalize relations with other countries and even to restore diplomatic relations with Greece in 1971. The Albanian case, along with those of Yugoslavia and China, demonstrates that the “national way” started in earlier times, and resistance during World War II was the most important factor. So instead of concentrating only on the post-Stalinist period, we should examine the earlier manifestations of communist nationalism both in the USSR and in other communist parties.

HOW TO USE NATIONALISM ON THE ROAD TO POWER

Nowadays more and more scholars agree that the turn toward nationalism was not a “deviation,” an “exception” or a “late” phenomenon in the development of the communist regimes in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. Instead, it developed at a relatively early stage, not only in the USSR itself but also within all other communist parties.¹⁵ Later studies pointed out that a crucial part of this process was Stalin’s concept of “building socialism in one country,” which was later reproduced in the Eastern European communist countries.¹⁶ Other studies show that even before the takeover, communist parties were instructed by the Comintern to seek mass support by appealing to national feelings, especially during foreign occupation in World War II. The development of a nationalist dimension comes from the internal logic of the communist movement on the road to political power, and even more so after power is achieved, and it was not restricted to some specific communist parties in smaller states. Concerning the communist parties outside the USSR, the question of *when* the national line started is of central importance, because an earlier beginning would also imply that it resulted from a line imposed from Moscow, not of a dissident reaction to Muscovite domination.

The first question here is how to evaluate the relationship between communism and nationalism before the adoption of the popular-front policy by the Comintern in 1934–1935. Were communist parties at that

¹⁵ Martin Mevius, *Agents of Moscow: The Hungarian Communist Party and the Origins of Socialist Patriotism, 1941–1953* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 8–25; Martin Mevius, “Reappraising Communism and Nationalism,” *Nationalities Papers* 37 (2009), 377–400; Yannis Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left: The Bulgarian Communist Party during the Second World War and the Early Post-War Years* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1–24.

¹⁶ Gripp, “Ten Years of National Communism,” 934. Gripp refers to Thomas Hammond, “The Origins of National Communism,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 34 (1958), 279; Paul Shoup, “Communism, Nationalism and the Growth of the Communist Community of Nations after World War II,” *American Political Science Review* 56 (1962), 892.

time truly “anti-national”? It might seem so, at least in the beginning. In most Balkan countries communist parties were created after World War I, usually on the basis of already existing Marxist parties or the more radical left wing of such parties (such as the Social Democrats and the Socialists). In the past and especially during World War I, many socialists and social democrats supported their respective national states. Yet after the war these were the people who remained immune to the national euphoria of that time (or were deeply disappointed by it) and who were most eager to join the communists. The leaderships of the newly established communist parties counted on radical elements, which were so numerous in the initial postwar years. Many politically active young people at that time were fascinated by the success of the Bolsheviks in Russia, and their goal was a genuine social revolution. Within a few years and after a number of failed attempts in different countries, it became clear that there was not enough support for immediate proletarian revolution anywhere outside Soviet Russia.

As a consequence communist parties outside the USSR also started to rely on other forms of discontent, and they made particular use of concerns over “oppressed nationalities.”¹⁷ In fact this issue was an important dimension of the Russian Revolution itself: in achieving power, the Bolsheviks initially profited from the discontent of the “oppressed nationalities” but shortly afterwards turned toward re-centralization and within less than two decades even started to rely on Russian nationalism for self-legitimation and mass mobilization.

World War I satisfied certain national demands, especially those of people living under the Habsburgs and in Russia, but at the same time the redrawing of borders led to other “injustices.” And already before this war, in the Balkans the disputes about the Ottoman territorial heritage also left compact groups under “foreign power.” In this situation the national issue easily attracted the interest of the communist leaders, although their considerations were often only tactical. Still, for many communists it was not a mere tactic—they saw world revolution and communist power as the ultimate solution to all problems, including national oppression. At the same time some members of nationalist movements sincerely adopted radical leftist ideologies, while others considered using them as a banner

¹⁷ Walker Connor, *The National Question in Marxist-Leninist Theory and Strategy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984).

in their struggle for liberation; communist parties also turned to be an appropriate organizational framework for this struggle.

The national minority problematic was an important issue for some communist parties, which in fact expressed the political demands of the minorities in countries that acquired new territories with compact minorities. This presented an opportunity for the Comintern and the respective communist parties to gain popularity, and at least in theory it was a factor in three countries in the Balkan region. In the Romanian case, after 1918 the proportion of minorities rose from 8 percent to 28 percent of the population. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (the official name of Yugoslavia until 1929) was not concerned only with minorities—it was a unified nation-state only in theory, and that theory was held mostly by Serbian elites professing centralism. Greece also incorporated territories with an alien population, although the massive population exchange with Turkey in the 1920s substantially homogenized the new provinces. These three countries were a natural choice for the communist policy of mobilizing the discontent of the “oppressed nationalities.” In Yugoslavia the Communist Party attempted to reach an understanding with Croats (the Croatian Peasant Party of Stjepan Radić) and Macedonian Bulgarians (the IMRO, led by Todor Aleksandrov), but these alliances failed. Still the communist parties did not rule out using the discontent of the “oppressed nationalities” to further their own projects, at least in the short run, and to seek support among these groups.

While supporting the claims of irredentist minorities, the communist parties were not completely “anti-national,” simply because in the context of the Balkan mosaic, taking a stance against one nationalism often meant serving another one. The Romanian Communist Party seemed openly “anti-national,” but its members of Hungarian and Bulgarian origin were in fact defending their national interests. The concept of a “Macedonian nation” was directed against Serbian/Yugoslav assimilationism but, at least in the short run, was helpful to Bulgarian maneuverings. The idea to create an independent Dobrudja (1924) was obviously anti-Romanian and thus pro-Bulgarian; in fact later on (1933) the position of the Comintern changed in favor of directly transferring Southern Dobrudja to Bulgaria, which corresponded even better to Bulgarian interests. Bulgarian communists were very active in this direction in the 1930s and thus paralleled the efforts of the Bulgarian state. Bulgarian communists managed to impose their own agenda on the Balkan policy of the Comintern, also due to the fact that they were overrepresented in its leadership as well as in the Balkan Communist Federation. That included not only the ambitions

of Bulgarian irredentism but also the tacit acceptance of Bulgarian territorial integrity—unlike the Bulgarian enclaves in neighboring countries, the compact Turkish minority in Bulgaria was never addressed by communist propaganda in the same way.¹⁸

In the years immediately after World War I, Bulgaria itself presented extremely favorable conditions—a strong communist party, a defeated country with its own internal problems and claims on territories that were then part of neighboring countries. The Communist Party was active among refugees in Bulgaria, which were both relatively poor and active in irredentist organizations. Thus the Communist Party managed to address and simultaneously exploit the grievances of the socially disadvantaged elements and the nationalism of the “oppressed nationalities.”

Later on, communist parties adopted a clearly different approach to nationalism, or as they preferred to call it, patriotism. As early as the 1930s, foreign observers commented that the regime in Moscow was more concerned with strengthening the Russian state than with the world revolution and that it was simultaneously rehabilitating Russian patriotism. In the 1930s even conservative and anti-communist politicians, intellectuals and journalists openly praised the new tendency. Some calculated how this new line might fit with the nationalist agenda of their own state—hardly at all for most immediate neighbors of the Soviet Union, like Romania, but rather well under certain conditions for other countries, like Bulgaria or Yugoslavia. During the brief German-Soviet alliance, members of Bulgaria’s ruling circles were, at the same time, pleased with the rehabilitation of Russian patriotism, because it was seen as anti-Turkish and also because the anti-Versailles positions of Soviet diplomacy could help the revision of borders with the three other neighboring countries.¹⁹ At other times, countries like Yugoslavia expected Soviet support on an anti-German basis.

The relationship between nationalism and communism in other countries was more controversial, because communist parties there had to comply with directives from Moscow, which most often meant with the Soviets’ international agenda. Throughout the interwar period and during World War II, the communist parties were constantly accused of serving foreign interests. But policies of the Comintern (and more importantly of

¹⁸ Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*, 33.

¹⁹ Sotir Yanev, *Za Săvetska Rusia. Otnosheniya i Pretsenki* (Dupnitsa: Br. Pilevi, 1940), 9, 12–14; Deyan Deyanov, *Dve dumi v Narodnoto Săbranie. V Săvetska Rusia* (Sofia: Dobrinov, 1941), 58.

the Soviet leadership) were also changing. The major turn took place in the mid-1930s with the concept of “popular fronts” that had to unite all “democratic” forces against fascism. That was a dramatic change from the policy of the previous years in several regards. From 1927 to 1934, communists had been extremely critical of all other leftist parties, especially the social democrats; now they were seeking a broader alliance with all “democratic” and “anti-fascist” parties. The new line was also critical of “national nihilism” and opted for a “patriotic” orientation of the communist parties.

The “popular front” line was an expanded version of the policy of the communist parties to seek “allies” in broader coalition in the “united fronts” during the 1920s, when the limited number of industrial workers forced communist leaders to seek allies among “working peasants.” In addition, communist parties had already learned to use parallel organizations (such as worker’s parties) while the communist parties themselves were outlawed. Seeking larger support in the 1930s inevitably meant appealing to circles with a nationalistic outlook. In fact the change was not that subtle—the directives of the Comintern explicitly advocated the adoption of a patriotic line and the veneration of national symbols. At that time communist parties were outlawed in many countries, which meant the new line had little practical effect in the short term. However, it turned to be a useful exercise for the future and more precisely for the resistance during the war.²⁰

Moreover, Soviet interests often coincided with those of other countries, and thus the respective communist parties were not only allowed but directly instructed to support the integrity and the independence of their country. The anti-Nazi resistance during World War II is certainly the culmination of this stance, when communists in a number of European countries were simultaneously serving the cause of national liberation and the interests of the Soviet Union.

The most important factor in the change in Comintern policies in the mid-1930s was the ambition of the Soviet leadership under Stalin to stabilize its power within the USSR. It gradually subjected its foreign policy to the practical needs of Soviet Russia instead of pursuing the idea of a world revolution. As a consequence the Soviet Union largely took on the old ambitions and claims of Imperial Russia. In addition it concentrated on

²⁰ Kevin McDermott and Jeremy Agnew, *The Comintern: A History of International Communism from Lenin to Stalin* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 131 ff.

attempts to regain territories that once belonged to the empire but were lost after World War I—mostly those ceded to Poland and Romania, as well as the Baltic states and Finland. The border in Caucasus and the control over the Straits became matters of latent tension in relations with Turkey.

In the Stalinist period the “patriotic” policy and propaganda of any communist party was largely subjected to Soviet interests, or at least had to take them into account. From the very beginning Russian Bolsheviks enjoyed great prestige among all other communist parties and naturally had a great impact on the policies of the Comintern as a whole and of all other communist parties. Communist parties abroad gradually became obedient tools of this policy, and this trend culminated in the 1930s and 1940s. In addition, the purges in the USSR in 1936–1938, which touched the émigré cadres of all other communist parties, secured an even higher level of obedience to the changing line of the leadership. As a result communist parties usually followed strictly the policy line of the USSR and the Comintern, even when it changed in the most unexpected ways, as was the case with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939.

The shift of 1934–1935 was a reaction to the advance of fascist movements and especially the Nazis’ 1933 rise to power in Germany, which demonstrated that the communists had miscalculated when they treated the social democrats as their main opponents. The new line was at least temporarily successful in France and Spain, where popular-front governments came into power, but also in other countries, where communist parties gained more popularity than in the previous few years. This new line served developments far away from the Balkans, but it had a strong impact on the policy of the parties here. In fact its “patriotic” aspects were rather well accepted (as in Greece), but the need to renounce the radicalism of the previous years was hard to digest for those who remained loyal to the party after all the years of ultra-leftist rhetoric and policies (as in Bulgaria).

Not only did the communist parties in Europe receive directives from Moscow, but cadres trained in the USSR were also sent back to their respective countries to impose the new line of “popular fronts”; how to handle the national question was part of their education. The paradox was that Muscovite cadres were the first to internalize the new political line of “popular front” and rehabilitation of the national/patriotic values and symbols, while on the ground, many local communists were still faithful to the radical revolutionary ideals of the recent past.²¹ The latter were

²¹ Mevius, “Reappraising Communism and Nationalism,” 389.

accused of “Left sectarianism” and those among them who still openly spoke about “soviet power” or “revolution” were severely criticized. Some of them fell victim to the purges of 1936–1938, while others were demoted in the party hierarchy.

On the other hand it would be exaggerated to claim that communists on the ground were simply complying with the directives from Moscow. In many cases the instructions were too ambitious to follow in practice, but on other occasions the communist leaders in Yugoslavia, Albania and even Bulgaria were self-confident enough to go further than suggested. What is also important is that instructions were deliberately ambiguous, leaving to the local communists the responsibility how to achieve the ambitious goals. Soviet supremacy did not exclude competition between different parties for Moscow’s approval and support.

The line of supporting patriotism after the mid-1930s did not mean that the cause of oppressed nationalities was completely abandoned. The ambiguity led to conflicting interpretations by neighboring parties. While some supported the state (as a possible ally of the USSR in a future war), others struggled for the secessionist cause of their own community or supported their “enslaved” compatriots.”²² The popular-front tactics rehabilitated state nationalism but could not renounce revolutionary nationalism. To mention just one example, from as late as the 1980s and 1990s, the Kurdish nationalists fought under the Marxist banner of the Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK). In the Third World the communist movement relied on anti-colonialism, meaning that once again it was trying to gain wider support by simultaneously combating “national oppression” and “capitalist exploitation.”²³

The “patriotic” line of the mid-1930s fully bloomed during the war, when “national fronts” became a useful banner for the local communist parties. Balkan communist parties became more active against “fascist occupation” only after the beginning of the German invasion against the USSR. In fact, while the German-Soviet alliance of August 1939 cast the popular-front tactics into disarray, the German invasion of June 1941 made those tactics more appropriate than ever before. Obviously the line of June 1941 fit the situation of the occupied countries—(most of) Yugoslavia, Greece

²² Joseph Rothschild, *The Communist Party of Bulgaria: Origins and Development 1883–1936* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 202.

²³ W. Raymond Duncan, “Ideology and Nationalism in Attracting Third World Leaders to Communism: Trends and Issues in the Late Twentieth Century,” *World Affairs* 151 (1988–1989) 3, 105–116.

and even Albania. Here the guerrilla war against the occupation forces simultaneously contributed to the effort of the anti-Nazi coalition, including the USSR. In fact the shock of the June 1941 German blitzkrieg was far more important for the USSR itself than any policy and/or propaganda change of the previous decade. The critical situation demanded radical measures, among them the even more pronounced rehabilitation of Russian patriotism, as well as that of the Orthodox Church.

During the first years of World War II, the situation also changed dramatically in the Balkans themselves. Some of the winners of the previous world war (Yugoslavia and Greece) were occupied, while Bulgaria, a member of the defeated camp, enjoyed not only state integrity and internal stability but even territorial enlargement at the expense of three neighboring countries. The impact of these events on the respective communist parties was exactly the opposite—the Bulgarian Communist Party was marginalized in the euphoria of the “national unification,” while the Greek and the Yugoslav communist parties, weak as they were, found themselves facing greater opportunities. Within a few years the stronger resistance movements against the occupation gave power and prestige to the respective communist parties, and that was most visible in the changed balance between the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav communist parties. The leadership in Moscow also started to tolerate the Communist Party of Yugoslavia—first because it was more promising, and later because it actually became more successful.

The situation differed significantly in Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary and even in the newly established puppet states (the Independent State of Croatia and the Slovak Republic). In the case of the independent states that joined the Axis, communist propaganda was based on a different type of argument—that the pro-German orientation was leading the country to a military defeat. As this defeat approached, the communist parties started to appear not so much as instruments serving a foreign power but as those warning against the imminent threat. They also appeared to be a group that could establish better relations with the war’s victors, particularly with the advancing Soviet army, to the advantage of the country as a whole. The Bulgarian and Albanian communist leadership had to counterbalance the official propaganda of “national unification” that accompanied the initial successes of the Axis powers. The crucial point here was that with the approaching victory of the anti-Nazi coalition, the problem of “winners vs. losers” in the war had to overshadow the “national unification,” which in both cases failed.

The Bulgarian case became an exception insofar as the Communist Party here managed to organize a guerrilla movement. Bulgarian communists

pretended that the country was “occupied” by the “Germans,” but as a whole the armed “resistance” was incomparably weaker than in the occupied countries—at its peak it numbered no more than 6,000–7,000 partisans. At the same time the movement was more openly “communist”—more than 80 percent of those in it were members of the Communist Party or of its youth organization (*Rabotnicheskiyat mladezhki sayuz*—RMS), while only a few percent of the partisans in Yugoslavia and Greece were formally admitted as Communist Party members.²⁴ The comparison between the Bulgarian case on the one hand and the Greek, Yugoslav and Albanian guerrilla movements on the other demonstrates to what extent the experience of foreign occupation alone could swell the ranks of the communist-led partisan units. Within Yugoslavia, Croatia remained a special case, and half of the partisans were from the Serbian minority.²⁵

Thus in all cases “antifascist resistance” during the war proved to be the basis for the strengthening of the patriotically oriented communist parties. That does not automatically mean political success, which depended on and in most cases directly reflected the “spheres of influence” of the winning powers. In the summer of 1944, Moscow instructed the Communist Party in Bulgaria to take an intransigent position and to avoid compromise with the traditional parties of the opposition. At exactly the same time, the Communist Party of Greece was strongly advised by special Soviet envoys to take a reconciliatory stand toward the Greek government in exile, controlled by the British.²⁶ That was the result of the negotiations between Great Britain and the USSR from May 1944 onwards, which secured Greece as part of the British sphere while placing Romania (and Bulgaria) in the Soviet one. The “external” factor was decisive.

The case of Poland demonstrates that the armed resistance did not automatically lead to communist domination, but in the occupied Balkan countries that was exactly the result. Despite the existence of non-communist resistance in all three occupied countries, after 1943 communists clearly appeared to be militarily more powerful, while non-communist units were not only weaker but more and more often compromised because they started to collaborate with the German occupational forces

²⁴ Doncho Dochev, *Partizanite: mit i realnost. Sotsiologicheskio izsledvane* (Plovdiv: Makros, 2004), 161; Mark Mazower, *Inside Hitler's Greece: The Experience of Occupation, 1941–44* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1995), 297 ff; Bernd J. Fischer, *Shqipëria gjatë Luftës 1939–1945* (Tirana: Çabej, 2004), 171 ff.

²⁵ Sabrina Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962–1991* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992), 206.

²⁶ Andre Gerolymatos, *Red Acropolis, Black Terror: The Greek Civil War and the Origins of Soviet-American Rivalry, 1943–1949* (New York: Basic Books, 2004), 121–125.

against the advance of the communists. The communist ideology and discipline of these parties was very important for their successes in the “national liberation movement.” First, their organization as strictly centralized parties gave them the ability to operate under foreign occupation or a dictatorial regime. The communist leadership most often disregarded the human cost that paralyzed the traditional non-communist opposition (as well as some of the communists themselves) and launched risky and often doomed initiatives. Thus in the long run the communist parties appeared to be the political force that did not surrender, and after the turn in the war, they were better placed to lead the fight against the occupation or simply to assume power after the retreat of the German forces. At that point these resistance movements received some military aid from Great Britain, which was also a sign of political recognition. Second, even though, following instructions from Moscow, the leaderships of the local communist parties constantly denied that they intended to establish “soviet power” or to “Bolshevize” their countries, it was precisely the expectation of profound social and political changes that attracted more radical elements. Radical young people were a substantial part of the armed movement. The resistance movement was not only about liberation but also about the social changes this liberation would bring.

Even if the “patriotism” of the popular fronts was presented as something fundamentally different from “fascism” and even “bourgeois chauvinism,” tensions between the “fraternal parties” and the respective “peoples” were inevitable. Only strong control from above (the Kremlin) and/or the existence of a powerful common enemy could prevent the potential conflicts between “national-liberation movements.” During the war this archenemy was obviously Nazi Germany. Later, in negotiations between themselves, communists redirected themselves against the Western powers—first the “intrigues” of Great Britain and later the interventions of the United States. For example the secretary of the Bulgarian Workers Party, Traycho Kostov, tried to convince his counterpart in Macedonia, Lazar Koliševski, not to raise the question of the “unification of Macedonia” (which meant changing the frontier at Bulgaria’s expense), because at the time such a question favored British influence in the region.²⁷ In the long run the differences between neighboring countries inevitably surfaced, despite Europe’s division into blocs and Moscow’s supervision. A similar trend can also be seen

²⁷ Traycho Kostov to Lazar Koliševski, November 21, 1944: TsDA (Central State Archive—Sofia), 1-b/7/197.

within socialist Yugoslavia, which as a project gave hopes to the various nations of the country during the occupation; in the decades of peaceful coexistence after the war, the lack of an external threat and the decreasing power of the center allowed nationalist tensions to arise again.

The dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 did not mean that Moscow renounced control over communist parties—key figures of the Comintern apparatus were transferred to the newly created International Information Department of the CC of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). The last secretary general of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov, was appointed deputy head, and shortly thereafter head, of this department. His office was now in the Kremlin, and it became even easier in practical terms to coordinate his moves with Stalin and Molotov.²⁸ The patriotic propaganda and the formal independence from the Comintern had to compensate fully for the direct dependence of communist parties on the Soviet leadership. On the other hand the war caused added troubles in communications between Moscow and communist parties' leaderships in most of Europe, which gave them more liberty in dealing with day-to-day affairs; for some that also meant more self-confidence.

Following the establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe after World War II, the communist parties remained dependent on instructions coming from Moscow, even if in some cases the directives called for following a "moderate" line in order to avoid accusations of "Bolshevization" and "sovietization." The paradox is that the most successful communist parties were the first to emancipate themselves—that was the case for Tito's Yugoslavia and, albeit in a different way, for Enver Hoxha's Albania, as well as for China.

After 1944 communist parties in Eastern Europe continued to use the anti-fascist and patriotic rhetoric of "popular fronts" in order to consolidate their power. But their takeover also led to their adopting more nationalistic attitudes, because it added a new dimension, namely state interests. Communist parties employed a whole range of rhetorical techniques used by the previous regimes—accusing the opposition of "splitting the forces of the nation" and "serving foreign interests." The first months after the communist takeover were also the last months of the war against Nazi Germany, and wartime mobilization created favorable conditions for the consolidation of power. Communists presented themselves initially as the

²⁸ Ilcho Dimitrov in the introduction to Georgi Dimitrov, *Dnevnik, 9 mart 1933–6 fevruari 1949* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski," 1997), 34.

leading force in the war of the already “liberated” country against Nazi Germany, and later as a champion of postwar reconstruction, which again demanded full mobilization.

At the same time communist propaganda presented the Soviet Union as the power protecting the national interests of the given country, even in cases when the opposite was clearly true. Thus the USSR annexed Bessarabia but asserted Romania’s right to recover Transylvania from Hungary. The USSR annexed vast territories in eastern Poland but supported the country’s efforts to move its border as far west as possible at the expense of defeated Germany. The USSR also annexed Transcarpathian Ruthenia from Czechoslovakia but defended the territorial integrity of the rest of the country against possible (though at that time not very likely) claims from other neighboring countries and the respective minorities within Czechoslovak borders. Such support was often conditional. For example, Romania received Transylvania back only after the pro-communist Petru Groza government was established (March 6, 1945). In Allied control commissions in countries occupied by the Soviet army, the Soviet representatives regularly appeared to be defendants of the respective state interest against the Western Allies. For instance, they rejected demands on disarmament and control over the armistice.²⁹ Soviet representatives also supported the communist-led governments against Western interventions into “internal affairs” when political freedoms and free elections were discussed.

Communist ideology underestimated nationalism as a transitory phenomenon (characteristic only of “capitalist society”), and initially concessions to nationalism were seen as tactical moves. Nationalism was instrumentalized by communist party leaderships but was also a genuine part of the thinking of the communists. In reports written for internal use, communist leaders expressed the traditional nationalist feelings common to their countrymen. For example, Bulgarian émigrés in Moscow who otherwise condemned the “chauvinistic policies of the Bulgarian bourgeoisie” advocated the right of their country to the very same territories in neighboring countries that were also claimed by traditional irredentist milieus.³⁰ The communist leadership in Sofia was thinking in the same way, and in 1941, after the German invasion in Yugoslavia and Greece and the “national

²⁹ *The American Military Mission in the Allied Control Commission for Bulgaria 1944–1947: History and Transcripts*, ed. Michael M. Boll (Boulder, CO, and New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

³⁰ *Izvori za istoriyata na Dobrudzha, 1919–1941*, vol. 2, eds. Petăr Todorov et al. (Sofia: BAN, 1993), 245–253, 409–415.

unification" of Bulgaria, it used the opportunity to bring under its control the communist party organization in Thrace and Macedonia.

Communists differentiated between "[proletarian] patriotism" as something positive and "[bourgeois] nationalism," especially "chauvinism," as something negative. Later, some accepted "nationalism" as positive, while they regarded as negative only "extreme nationalism." Communists were "moderate" as nationalists but not on the defensive: they vehemently accused the "chauvinists" of being "traitors" who served their "foreign masters" and persecuted the genuine "patriots."

Communists shared much of the nationalist enthusiasm of their compatriots, and in many cases directives from the headquarters were slow to change this situation. While Bulgarian communists shared the priorities of Bulgarian national irredentism, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia initially supported the idea of an integral Yugoslavia; only in the late 1920s did it adopt the line that the state should be replaced by smaller independent states.³¹ Greek communists also felt uneasy with the idea of independence for Thrace and Macedonia and much more enthusiastically embraced the policy shift of 1935. The presence of nationalism was more than tactical.

Although communists sincerely accepted the internationalist thinking of communist ideology, their schooling inevitably included the omnipresent national agenda. And at certain points the two found a common logic. For instance, the idea of capitalist exploitation and oppression could go well together with the idea of national oppression. And if socialism could be constructed in "one single state," that could fit with the idea to develop the national state. Communist leaders combined communist ideology with nationalism without seeing a contradiction, but they often proposed original ideas to solve the old problems. Traditionally nationalists were interested in political independence and national unification (irredentism), but communists proposed different solutions, primarily some kind of federation(s) of "soviet republics"; at least initially, communist parties were not interested in ethnic homogenization of the (national) state.

These earlier years of the communist parties' national policy are also the most challenging to interpret. At later stages the communist regimes became largely self-centered and self-sufficient. In this context even scholars started to reflect on their own country's communist regime and seek to explain its "specificities" vis-à-vis communism in general, without seeing all the similarities, not to mention the mutual influences and

³¹ Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism*, 48.

entanglements, with other communist states. Such scholars overestimate the uniqueness of their own country's communist regime—whether it was “Romanian Stalinism” or “Bulgarian communism,”³² they often see it (at least in its Stalinist phase) as the “most servile” to Moscow, the most “anti-national,” or the “most brutal” in erasing the national traditions and elites.

One example is the misinterpretation of the national policy of the communist parties during the interwar period. It is often labeled “anti-national” even in cases when it advocated nothing more than equality for the minorities and friendly relations with neighboring countries. Some tactical maneuvers are simply misunderstood and misinterpreted, as in the case of the “new nations” recognized by the Comintern. Once again the comparison of different points of view is very useful—while most Bulgarian historians do not see the nationalism of their own communist party in the period before the late 1950s, scholars from neighboring countries easily recognize it. Unlike their Bulgarian colleagues they have no difficulty understanding that “independent” Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja and the respective nations were a Bulgarian maneuver.³³ The problem is that this project failed: from the Bulgarian point of view, Macedonian national independence was something fundamentally different from what was planned, the “Thracian nation” was stillborn because of the massive Graecization of Western Thrace, and the partial success in Dobrudja was of a different nature. In the context of late communist nationalism, the communist nationalism of the interwar period became difficult to understand and even to recognize. For that very reason it deserves more attention by present historiography.

The communist nationalism of the 1930s and 1940s long remained an underestimated phenomenon. The “patriotic” overtones in the “popular front” line at that time are well-known, but many scholars from the region have tended to see the “nationalism” of the communist parties only in neighboring countries, while they regarded their “own” communist party as “anti-national” and fully dependent on foreign interests for a longer period of time. In fact in the 1940s the communists themselves often accused one or another neighboring party of a “chauvinistic” attitude. Bulgarians saw the “nationalist” deviations among Greek communists and

³² See, for example, Tismăneanu, *Stalinism for all Seasons*; Ivaylo Znepolski, *Bălgarskiyat komunizăm* (Sofia: Ciela, 2010).

³³ Matthias Esche, *Die Kommunistische Partei Griechenlands 1941–1949* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1982) 31–32; Cătănuș, *Cadrilaterul*; Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left*.

accused the Yugoslav Macedonian communists of being “chauvinist.” In turn Macedonian communists accused the Bulgarians of the same sin, and so on.³⁴ Yugoslav communist advisers tried to teach internationalism to Albanian communists, and from the Albanian side this paternalistic attitude was called “chauvinistic.” Once again, present-day historiographies often repeat the same accusations.³⁵

The history of the national communisms and communist nationalisms in the post-Stalinist period is more widely known and less controversial. What is also important is that the roots of both “national communism” and “communist nationalism” lay in the previous decades. For these reasons our study will concentrate more on the earlier decades, when the interplay between communism and nationalism was certainly more dynamic and contradictory but also much more fruitful. It will try to examine the process at a more sophisticated level through one case study—the entanglements between communism and nationalism in the Macedonian case. That will give us the opportunity to examine in more detail several of the most important problems related to the topic in the region. First of all the study will address the controversial issue of the “new nations” recognized by the Comintern and the way it was interrelated with the interests of the other communist parties in the region. Second, it will examine the transition from communist-endorsed nationalism of an “oppressed nationality” to state nationalism of a communist regime. The problem is not only the case of Macedonia itself, nor it is restricted to mutual influences with neighboring countries. It is inextricably related to developments in Bulgaria and especially among Bulgarian communists, and at the same time it is an integral part of the Yugoslav problematic. In parallel the detailed presentation of the Macedonian case allows us to examine the historiographical debates, which reflected sharp divisions both on national and political lines and remain heated to the present day.

MACEDONIA—A CASE OF COMMUNIST “NATION-BUILDING”? A LOOK FROM THE FIELD OF HISTORIOGRAPHY

In 2005 Branko Crvenkovski, the then-president of the Republic of Macedonia and longtime leader of the Social Democratic Union (a political

³⁴ Traycho Kostov to Georgi Dimitrov, November 13, 1944: TsDA, 1-b/7/114.

³⁵ Xhelal Gjeçovi, *Lufta Antifashiste Nacionalçlirimtare* (Tirana, 1999); Demir Dymishi, *Lufta politike në udhëheqjen e PKSh (PPSh), 1944–1960* (Tirana: Toena, 2011), 30.

party identified with the former communists), issued an unusual initiative that provoked lively public debate. He suggested that a monument to Josip Broz Tito be built in the center of the Macedonian capital, Skopje. Crvenkovski argued that the Yugoslav communist ruler deserved such recognition for his contribution to the Macedonian nation. Combatants from World War II—former participants in an armed movement led by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia but glorified under the acronym NOB (*Narodno-osloboditelna borba*—National Liberation Struggle, 1941–1944)—expressed their enthusiasm for the president's proposal. They immediately erected a bust of Tito in a central location in Bitola, Macedonia's second-largest city, with no formal permission from the municipal authorities.

Cases like these are often treated and even condemned as “nostalgia” for the communist past. They are regarded as relapses of an anachronistic ideology or as expressions of attachment to what were imagined to be better times. This latter aspect is especially true of the memory of former Yugoslav citizens about life under Tito's rule, with its freedom of movement abroad, living standards based on a specific economic model different from Soviet centralized administrative planning, and a more pluralistic public space. But in the Macedonian case, the attitude to the Yugoslav communist past has a peculiar nuance that is difficult to accommodate in the ordinary “diagnosis” of the so-called “Yugo-nostalgia.” The explanation of this attitude, a largely positive one, is undoubtedly to be found in the history of Macedonian nationalism and, in particular, in its relationship to Yugoslav communism. It generated specific dilemmas.

Namely, after the southernmost Yugoslav republic proclaimed its independence in 1991, a rejection of the *ancien régime* was crucial in order to affirm the new state of sovereignty. Yet nearly all the national institutions and symbolic forms were constructed during that same regime. In 1944 the Macedonian state was created as a republic within the framework of the new federative and “people's” Yugoslavia. It was the successful outcome of a resistance movement in which Tito's Yugoslav “National Liberation” agenda was amalgamated with communism. Only after 1944 did the Macedonians obtain their own alphabet, officially recognized standard language, and the ability to develop a full-fledged national culture.³⁶

³⁶ The “nation-building” aspect of the Yugoslav regime is often emphasized by scholars whose research, in general, does not enjoy the sympathies of the Macedonian specialists, such as Stephen Palmer and Robert King, *Yugoslav Communism and the Macedonian Question* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1971); and Stefan Troebst, “Yugoslav Macedonia, 1943–1953: Building the Party, the State and the Nation,” in Stefan Troebst, *Das makedonische*

The first Macedonian schools and media—like the daily newspaper *Nova Makedonija*—were established by Tito's combatants in 1943–1944. The first Macedonian theater opened in 1945. The Macedonian Philharmonic Orchestra was set up in 1944, while the first Macedonian opera was performed in Skopje only in 1954. In 1950 the Marko Cepenkov Institute for Folklore was created, followed in 1953 by the Krste Misirkov Institute for Macedonian Language and by the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts (MANU) in 1967. The role of the Yugoslav communist regime was decisive even in the creation of a distinct Macedonian Orthodox Church in 1959, which was proclaimed autocephalous in 1967. National history itself took its final shape in a Yugoslav political and cultural framework. Its narrative was standardized by the Institute for National History, which was established in 1948 in Skopje.

In fact, in the field of historiography, communism and Macedonian nationalism are related on two counts. On the one hand, as some researchers stress, the “patriotic” mission of the historical research in Yugoslav Macedonia prevailed over the imperatives of Marxist-Leninist doctrinal purity.³⁷ This was certainly not exceptional for Eastern European historiographies during communism: in most cases, they perpetuated classical national(ist) narratives and interpretative patterns, and even reinforced a series of inherited clichés, at least from the 1960s on. This was, for instance, the case for Bulgarian historiography, whose interpretations and claims have traditionally been fought by Macedonian scholars. On the other hand, as “nationalist” as the Macedonian historiography from the communist period might seem, even today it might look no less “communist.” In the specific Macedonian context, there is no pre-communist historiographic tradition, self-identified as Macedonian in a national sense, whose “classical” authors and texts could be resurrected today and serve as an inspiration for the construction of a non-communist version of the past.³⁸ The Macedonian “master narrative” has inherited a particular interpretation of the history whose first drafts are to be found in the opinionated

Jahrhundert. Von den Anfängen der nationalrevolutionären Bewegung zum Abkommen von Ohrid 1893–2001 (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2007), 241–258.

³⁷ For instance, Ulf Brunnbauer, “Historiography, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia,” in *(Re)Writing History: Historiography in Southeast Europe after Socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster: Lit-Verlag, 2004), 165–200.

³⁸ As noted by James Frusetta, “Common Heroes, Divided Crimes: IMRO Between Macedonia and Bulgaria,” in *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe*, eds. John Lampe and Mark Mazower (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2004), 110–130.

writings of leftist and, finally, communist circles of the interwar Macedonian movement. Moreover, the Macedonian communists not only drafted Macedonian national history but also placed themselves at the top of its teleology: today, Macedonian historians still exalt the patriotic character of the communist National Liberation Struggle, directed mostly against the Bulgarian occupation during World War II.

As the example of historiography shows, in the Macedonian case, communism and nationalism are intertwined. It is difficult to indicate which one of these elements has priority. First, one must take into account the link between *Yugoslav* communism and Macedonian “nation-building.” Although cases of Macedonian nationalism are attested to as early as the 1870s, the definitive construction of Macedonian national identity coincides with the construction of communist Yugoslavia and was visibly encouraged by it. That is why, following Crvenkovski’s 2005 initiative, former communist partisans, politicians from the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia and historians affiliated with this party reminded the public that it was only in the framework of Tito’s Yugoslavia that the Macedonians were recognized as a separate nation and obtained their own statehood (*državnost*), language and culture. Prior to the communist Yugoslav regime, Macedonian national identity was not institutionalized: it was able to develop *thanks to*, not *despite*, Tito’s regime.

Second, the entanglement of nationalism and communism within Macedonian “nation-building” after World War II has historical roots in the interwar period, when *Bulgarian* communism played a crucial role in the development and the international legitimization of Macedonian nationalism. The leftist and communist circles that produced the first drafts of the Macedonian historiographical narrative were mostly affiliated with the Bulgarian Communist Party, and through it to international communism. Bulgarian communist leaders were instrumental in the Comintern’s recognition of Macedonian national identity. Thus it would be misleading to present the creation of a Macedonian republic in 1944 as a result of Tito’s fiat. In various periods of contemporary history, Yugoslav and Bulgarian—as well as Greek—communists have worked to promote Macedonian national identity.

It must be mentioned that a number of scholars have already taken an interest in the role of the Balkan communist parties, as well as of the Comintern, in the construction of the Macedonian national identity. This aspect often seems exaggerated. For instance, Greek scholarship presents Macedonian nationalism as an identity “mutation” launched by the

Balkan communists for their short-term goals.³⁹ The Bulgarian researchers also emphasize the communist connections to Macedonian nationalism, although their argument was modified somewhat after the fall of the Bulgarian communist regime in 1989. If previously they underlined the demiurgical role of the Yugoslav communists and treated Macedonian nationalism as their exclusive creation,⁴⁰ starting in the 1990s, they launched diatribes against the Bulgarian Communist Party, which they accused of sharing “responsibility” for the existence of a separate Macedonian nation today.⁴¹ Ironically, inside the Republic of Macedonia, right-wing critics of Crvenkovski’s initiative have noted that the practice of crediting Tito for all things Macedonian is actually quite close to the Greek and Bulgarian interpretations of history, which likewise portray modern Macedonia as a communist creation.⁴²

Conscious of this problem, more recent Macedonian historiography tries to reverse the link between communism and Macedonian nationalism declared by the rival Balkan scholarship. Instead of being a power that “generated” Macedonian nationalism, the communist movements from the interwar period and World War II are presented as simple tools of political promotion that were employed by a pre-existing Macedonian nationalism. This is the interpretation suggested, for instance, by Canadian-Macedonian historian Andrew Rossos.⁴³ From this point of view, the entanglement of the Macedonian national cause with that of communism was merely a “marriage of convenience”: the Macedonian patriots were using, for purely strategic reasons, communism’s revolutionary potential

³⁹ The “standard” Greek assessment is that of Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia* (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964); Evangelos Kofos, “The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation,” *Balkan Studies* 27 (1986), 157–172. For a more recent survey of the same question, see Spyridon Sfetas, *I diamorfosi tis slavo-makedonikis taftotitas. Mia epodyni diadikasia* (Thessaloniki: Vantias, 2003).

⁴⁰ See, for example, Kostadin Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya i makedonskiyat vâpros (1919–1945)* (Sofia: BAN, 1985) and Kosta Tsârnušanov, *Makedonizmat i sâprotivata na Makedoniya sreshtu nego* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1992) (the study was written during the communist period).

⁴¹ This is especially true of the studies of the 1944–1948 period, when the BCP encouraged and even imposed Macedonian national identity inside Bulgaria: Veselin Angelov, *Hronika na edno natsionalno predatelstvo* (Blagoevgrad: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1999).

⁴² Antonio Miloški, “Republika Makedonija (vo zagrada)—Tito,” *Utrinski vesnik*, June 4, 2005, accessed December 9, 2011, <http://star.utrinski.com.mk/?pBroj=1794&stID=37300&pR=7>.

⁴³ Andrew Rossos, “Macedonianism and Macedonian Nationalism on the Left,” in *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe*, eds. Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery (New Haven: Yale Center for International Area Studies, 1995),

and international connections. And certainly, for the Macedonians, just like for the other Yugoslav nations, the communist partisan movement during World War II was above all a national liberation movement directed against foreign occupation: the class ideology was secondary. It was a "mask" of purely "patriotic" aspirations.

However, a closer inspection of the policies of the Balkan communist parties concerning the "Macedonian question" between the wars and during World War II could call into question the clear-cut, simplified interpretations put forth by the local historiographies. Throughout this period, the relationship between communism and Macedonian nationalism was actually much more complex than what both of these versions imply. It was not merely a top-down "nation-building" planned by demiurgical communist parties or by an almighty Comintern. Yet it was less instrumentalist than the pure disguising of a national agenda behind communist propaganda. On the basis of their common radicalism directed against the political status quo, nationalism and communism found a common language and path in Macedonia. During this "fellow traveling,"⁴⁴ elements of national emancipation were sometimes adopted or used by the communist parties, and sometimes those parties inspired such elements. On some specific occasions, communists tried to arouse national feelings where they did not necessarily exist, but on other occasions, nationalists simply used communist rhetoric. At the same time, not only did communism and Macedonian nationalism become intertwined, but so did communism and Bulgarian irredentism, and communism and the Yugoslav project as well. This entanglement produced competing articulations of Macedonian identity that were homogenized only after World War II, in the framework of the People's (later Socialist) Republic of Macedonia.

THE BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION:
FROM BULGARIAN IRREDENTISM TO MACEDONIAN NATIONALISM . . .
AND VICE VERSA

The convergence of Marxism and the Macedonian political emancipation can be traced back to the local socialist movement from the late Ottoman period. Generally, its beginning is attributed to Vasil Glavinov who, in 1896, created the Macedonian(-Adrianopolitan) Social Democratic

⁴⁴ To use the expression of Anastasia Karakasidou, "Fellow Travelers, Separate Roads: The KKE and the Macedonian Question," *East European Quarterly* 27 (1993), 453–477.

Group. From the outset, it promoted the autonomist slogan “Macedonia for Macedonians,” as well as the internationalist project of a Balkan Federation. The programmatic documents and publications of the Macedonian socialists harshly criticized “Bulgarian chauvinism” and territorial ambitions in Macedonia. Sometimes they even claimed that the Macedonians should not be considered Bulgarians, Serbs or Greeks, as they were, above all, oppressed “slaves.”⁴⁵

It would nevertheless be farfetched to see in the local socialism an expression of Macedonian national ideology. For instance, the newspaper of the Macedonian socialists explicitly opposed the Serbian idea that the Macedonian Slavs represented a kind of Serbo-Bulgarian “paste” and declared their “purely Bulgarian” character.⁴⁶ The “Adrianopolitan” part of the group’s designation shows its commitment to the destiny of the Bulgarians in Thrace as well. It is difficult to place the socialist articulation of the national and social questions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries entirely under the categories of today’s Macedonian and Bulgarian nationalism. If Bulgarian historians today condemn the “national-nihilistic” positions of Glavinov’s group, their Macedonian colleagues seem frustrated by the fact that it was not “conscious” enough of Macedonians’ distinct ethnic character.⁴⁷

In any case, the Macedonian socialists were institutionally affiliated with the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, established in 1891. Its founder, Dimităr Blagoev, himself originated from Macedonia. Blagoev’s party shared the same slogans of a Balkan Federation and of “Macedonia for Macedonians.” The latter was understood in a supra-national way as a polity of all the “national elements” of the region: according to the ethnic terminology used in that period, these were “Bulgarians,” Turks, Greeks, Vlachs, Albanians and so on. Hence it is hard to distinguish between Bulgarian and Macedonian socialist programs prior to the Balkan Wars.

Moreover, the motto of Macedonian autonomy—also called “political separatism”—and that of Balkan federalism were by no means exclusively socialist. They were likewise promoted by the Macedonian freedom fighters, especially by those from the Internal Macedonian-Adrianopolitan Revolutionary Organization, founded in 1893. Based on their common

⁴⁵ For instance, *Politicheska svoboda*, April 19, 1899.

⁴⁶ *Politicheska svoboda*, March 29, 1898.

⁴⁷ See *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakiyskite bălgari 1878–1944*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Makedonski nauchen institut, Institut po Istoriya pri BAN, 1995), 280–281, 284.

radicalism, national and/or social, the national-liberation agenda and the socialist agenda were intermingled in the ideology and activity of some of the leading Macedonian revolutionaries. However, their supra-national agenda of an autonomous Macedonia did not necessarily contradict ethnic conceptions of Bulgarian nationalism. In a number of writings of the local revolutionaries, “autonomous Macedonia,” as a member of a future Balkan Federation, is presented as a means to achieve the liberation of the “Macedonian Bulgarians” without all the international complications that the agitation for “Greater Bulgaria” would inevitably provoke.⁴⁸

Thus the staunch opposition to Sofia’s irredentism was nevertheless compatible with a “soft irredentism.” In the revolutionary agenda of the Internal organization, an autonomous “Macedonia for Macedonians” was imagined as a way to protect the Bulgarian population in the Ottoman region from a possible Greek or Serbian occupation and assimilation. And, in some cases, “autonomous Macedonia” was clearly imagined by the revolutionaries as a “plan B” of the Bulgarian national “unification”: that is, as a first step toward the final annexation of Macedonia by the Bulgarian state, as with the short-lived Eastern Rumelia (1878–1885).

The socialist discourse, despite its harsh criticism of Bulgarian state “chauvinism,” was marked by the same ambivalences. They became even more pronounced after 1919 in the national program of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the newly founded, upgraded version of the intransigent Marxist party of Blagoev. During the Balkan Wars and World War I, his “Narrow Socialists” followed a strictly anti-imperialist and internationalist line and opposed Sofia’s military activities. In this respect, they differed from the activists of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, who sided with the Bulgarian army and state. This was the case even for the leftists among them, including the Macedonian socialist Dimo Hadzhi-dimov. At the same time, the Bulgarian Narrow Socialists deployed propaganda that is today often considered “anti-Bulgarian.” On one occasion,

⁴⁸ For instance, “Politicheski separatizăm,” *Pravo*, June 7, 1902. On the ambiguities of the Macedonian revolutionary supra-nationalism and “political separatism” vis-à-vis Bulgarian state nationalism: Tchavdar Marinov, “We, the Macedonians: The Paths of Macedonian Supra-Nationalism (1878–1912),” in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, ed. Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009); Tchavdar Marinov, “Famous Macedonia, the Land of Alexander: Macedonian Identity at the Crossroads of Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian Nationalism,” published in the first volume of the present series, *Entangled Histories of the Balkans. Vol. 1: National Ideologies and Language Policies*, eds. Roumen Daskalov and Tchavdar Marinov (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 273–330.

from the rostrum of the national parliament in Sofia, Blagoev, who was born in the village of Zagorichani (today Vasileiada in Greek Macedonia), even denied his Bulgarian origins and declared himself simply a "Slav."⁴⁹

The defeat of Bulgaria in World War I and the re-annexation of almost all of Macedonia by Greece and by the newly proclaimed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes revived the slogan of the autonomous "Macedonia for Macedonians." It was quickly embraced by the leftist revolutionaries from the former Internal Organization. Hadzhidimov published a brochure with the telling title *Back to Autonomy*, in which he criticized "Greater Bulgarian" nationalism and "imperialism." Simultaneously, he explicitly indicated that the idea of the creation of autonomous Macedonia within its "geographical boundaries" and outside Bulgaria was a "Bulgarian idea" intended to save the "Bulgarian element" in the region.⁵⁰ A somewhat similar project was announced in May 1919 by the First Congress of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Narrow Socialists)—the party that Hadzhidimov soon joined, followed by a number of Macedonian activists. Instead of the vague slogan of Macedonian autonomy, the BCP advocated the creation of a Soviet Republic of Macedonia within a future Balkan Socialist Soviet Federation. This was hardly surprising from the Bulgarian communists, given their earlier socialist programs. But they went even further, calling for a similar status for the regions of Thrace and Dobrudja.

Today anti-communist analysts interpret the BCP's advocacy of an independent (but Soviet) Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja as a clearly "anti-Bulgarian" policy. Some of these analysts even accuse the communists of having called for the extinction of Bulgaria.⁵¹ One must, however, imagine the map of this country after World War I. As a result of its alliance with the Central Powers, Bulgaria had lost Macedonia, and it would

⁴⁹ Blaže Ristovski, *Istorija na makedonskata nacija* (Skopje: MANU, 1999), 503.

⁵⁰ Dimo Hadzhidimov, *Nazad kăm avtonomijata* (Sofia, 1919).

⁵¹ An important collection of documents on the BCP, the Comintern and the Macedonian question is meant to demonstrate the evolution of the BCP from proletarian internationalism to "national nihilism": *BKP, Kominternăt i makedonskiyat vâpros, 1919–1946*, vol. 1 (Sofia: GUA pri MS, 1999), 10. The "Macedonian" policy of the BCP and the CI was studied by Vasil Vasilev, "Bălgarskata komunisticheska partiya i makedonskiyat vâpros (1919–1934)," in *Bălgarskiyat natsionalen vâpros sled Berlinskiya kongres (1878–1944)* (Sofia: BAN, 1986), 170–236; Petăr Semerdzhiev, *BKP, Makedonskiyat vâpros i VMRO* (Sofia: Dike, n.d.); Ivan Katardžiev, *Vreme na zreenje. Makedonskoto nacionalno prašanje meĝu dvete svetski vojni*, vol. 1 (Skopje: Kultura, 1977), 495–560. See also the collection of documents: *Makedonskoto prašanje vo dokumentite na Kominternata*, vol. 1, eds. Vlado Popovski and Lenina Žila (Skopje: Gjurgja, 1999).

keep only the small Pirin region. Even the area of Strumica annexed after the Balkan Wars was cut off and given to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Practically the whole of Dobrudja was outside Bulgaria, in the interwar "Greater Romania." When speaking of Thrace, the communists (and others as well) were certainly thinking more concretely of the status of Western Thrace (or *Belomorska Trakiya*—"Aegean Thrace"—as it is known in Bulgaria). Until this area was annexed to Greece in 1920, the postwar Agrarian government maintained that it should remain Bulgarian. In the project of Macedonian, Thracian and Dobrudjan republics, there was clearly not much to separate from Bulgaria.

In this initial period, the Bulgarian communists certainly sought to "solve" the *Bulgarian* "national question": the three regions concerned actually represented the three main axes of Bulgarian interwar irredentism. The BCP claimed that a viable solution was impossible in the old "bourgeois" manner—through a territorial expansionism. The resolution of its First Congress stipulated that "the bourgeoisie, greedy for plunder and conquest, is incapable of obtaining the unification and independence of the people/nation (*naroda*)" and that "its nationalist and bellicose policy has gone bankrupt."⁵² Following the ratification of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (November 1919), which was disastrous for Bulgaria, Dimităr Blagoev even accused the bourgeois parties of national "treason": the results of their "nationalist aggressive policy" were only defeats and national catastrophes. Blagoev labeled the "bourgeoisie" a "killer of its people" and even spoke of the "mass extermination" of Bulgarians as a consequence of Sofia's previous imperialist policy.⁵³ The leader of the BCP also condemned the "oppressive" peace treaty, as it "dismembered" the Bulgarian people and doomed parts of it to a national "slavery."

The party's official resolutions and appeals stated that the "Greater Bulgaria" plan pursued by the "bourgeois nationalists" was a harmful chimera: it could not bring about the desired "liberation of Macedonia" and "national unification of the Bulgarian people."⁵⁴ Instead, the means for that was the creation of a Balkan Socialist Federative Soviet Republic. Nothing in the available documents on the "national question" from the first postwar years shows that Macedonia and the other regions concerned (Thrace,

⁵² BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 33.

⁵³ Ibid., 40–41.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 42–44: an appeal of the Central Committee of the BCP (Narrow Socialists) concerning the Macedonian question and the creation of a Balkan Federation (November 1919).

Dobrudja and even the South Morava province in Serbia!) were not imagined by the Bulgarian communists to be lands populated predominantly with Bulgarians.⁵⁵ Obviously, the “internationalism” claimed by the communists prevented them from an explicit subscription to “chauvinist” territorial aspirations: thus the already used “political separatism,” in the Macedonian case at least, was put back in action.

It would, however, be too simplistic to see the program of “free” Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja within a Balkan Federation as a cleverly calculated crypto-nationalistic maneuver of the Bulgarian communists. Their declarations also referred to all the other “dismembered” and “subjugated” Balkan peoples and to their right to “self-determination,” “independence” and “national unification.” This “internationalism” was not just the rhetorical mask of a hidden nationalism: the patriotic ideal, self-evident and never genuinely questioned, was supposed to be achieved without hindering all the other national aspirations taken as legitimate as well. Nationalism, deeply entrenched in the political culture of the Bulgarian and, in general, of the Balkan communists, did not, however, eliminate their communism and “internationalism.” Whether naive and shortsighted or not, this pattern of thinking and course of action were bound to produce paradoxical results.

When discussing the attitude of the international communist movement toward the “national question” in the Balkans, the focus on Bulgarian communist activists is surely justified. Bulgarians assumed important positions within the central apparatus of the Comintern: from 1921–1922 to 1943 (the year the Third International ceased to exist), Vasil Kolarov (previously secretary of the Central Committee of the BCP) was a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) and of its Presidium, and for about two years (1922–1924) he was its general secretary. The most famous Bulgarian communist leader—Georgi Dimitrov—was the head of the ECCI between 1935 and 1943 after having chaired the Western European Bureau of the CI. In 1920 the latter set up a special structure called the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF), which was supposed to coordinate the activities of the communist parties in the Balkans. This structure

⁵⁵ In February 1920, Blagoev allegedly confessed to the British military attaché in Sofia and to a journalist from the *Times* that he was “first of all a Bulgarian patriot” and that only through Bolshevik principles could “the thousands of Bulgarians in Macedonia, Dobrudja and Thrace” achieve their self-determination. According to the report, when the British interlocutors noted that in this case, his party, although socialist by name, was imperialistic in essence and aspired to “Greater Bulgaria,” Blagoev agreed. *BKP, Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 45.

was headed by Dimitrov. Concerning the Macedonian question, the line of the BCP greatly influenced the policy of the international communist headquarters, although the Bulgarian activists constantly had to take into account the political imperatives coming both from the Soviet leaders of the CI and the interests of Moscow's foreign policy.⁵⁶

From the outset, the Balkan Communist Federation condemned the nationalist policies of the Balkan "bourgeoisies" as hostile to the interests of the "peoples" inhabiting Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja.⁵⁷ Given the fact that Dimitrov—himself of Macedonian origin—still spoke of the oppression of "compact masses" of "Bulgarian population" in Macedonia,⁵⁸ the "patriotic" logic of the Bulgarian communists is more than visible behind the reference to the "peoples" in the mentioned regions. However, at the Sixth Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation (November 1923), Kolarov stated that the "Macedonian population wishes to be recognized as a nationality, to obtain its own national rights."⁵⁹ Before then, the term "nationality," likely to imply ethnic difference, and the reference to national rights were not applied to the Macedonians by the Bulgarian communists. In retrospect, Kolarov's declaration can be seen as an important step toward the recognition of a Macedonian national identity. Nevertheless, this step did not go too far: Kolarov specified that the wish in question existed not only among "the Bulgarians of Macedonia" but also among the other elements (Greeks, Turks, Albanians, Serbs) inhabiting the region.⁶⁰

Yet in its communist articulations, the traditional supra-national program of "Macedonia for Macedonians" was already acquiring a distinct

⁵⁶ In his memoirs, Dimitar Vlahov (activist of the Macedonian revolutionary movement in the Ottoman era, during the interwar period an agent of the Comintern's "Macedonian" policy, later the founder of the Yugoslav republic of Macedonia) emphasizes that "the BCP had a leading position in the Balkan Communist Federation and decisive influence within the leadership of the Comintern": *Memoari na Dimitar Vlahov* (Skopje: Nova Makedonija, 1970), 325. Concerning the Macedonian question and the Soviet foreign policy, see the collection of documents published by Lenina Žila and Vlado Popovski, *Makedonskoto prašanje vo sovjetskata nadvorešna politika (1922–1940 god.)*. *Dokumenti*, vols. 1–2 (Skopje: Univerzitet Sv. Kiril i Metodij, 2008). On the complex relationship between the Comintern and the Narkomindel, see McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*.

⁵⁷ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 93.

⁵⁸ *Makedoniya. Sbornik ot dokumenti i materiali* (Sofia: BAN, 1978), 647.

⁵⁹ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 151.

⁶⁰ See Katardžiev, *Vreme na zreenje*, vol. 1, 544. Katardžiev believes that Kolarov imagined a kind of Macedonian political nation intended to consolidate the local "Bulgarians," Turks, and others.

(ethno)national aspect. The Bulgarian leaders were obviously drawing on the Leninist theory of the right of national self-determination but also on the Soviet experience in the handling of the “national question.” Of particular importance in this field was the doctrine of the then-Commissar of Nationalities—Stalin.⁶¹ However, initially at least, there was a good deal of uncertainty and vagueness in the usage of terms like “nationality” or “nation”: the communist leaders also referred to “Macedonian and Thracian nationalities” in the plural.⁶²

In any case, from 1924 on, the plan to separate Macedonia, Thrace and Dobrudja from the existing Balkan states—supported by the Bulgarian leaders⁶³—was imposed by the Balkan Communist Federation and the Comintern upon the other Balkan parties. A number of leading Greek communists (such as Yanis Kordatos and Thomas Apostolidis) and Yugoslav communists (such as Sima Marković and Života Milojković) opposed the slogan of “unified and independent Macedonia (and Thrace).”⁶⁴ For that reason, they were harshly criticized by the international communist headquarters—in particular by the Bulgarian Dimitrov.⁶⁵ Later, Kordatos declared that communism in Greece behaved like an ally of Bulgarian chauvinism,⁶⁶ and this evaluation was perhaps not so absurd. In 1924, on the basis of the same program of independent Macedonia in a Balkan Federation, the Bulgarian communists succeeded in establishing cooperation, albeit only briefly, with the pro-Bulgarian “chauvinists” from the right-wing interwar Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization.

In Moscow, the administrators of the world communist headquarters believed that the national liberation movements possessed a significant “revolutionary potential.” Thus they were interested in bringing under their influence the (still) important Macedonian organization and giving it the “right direction.” As a result of a series of talks with its leaders, in

⁶¹ On the Soviet national policy during the interwar period, known as “indigenization” (*korenizatsiya*): Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

⁶² BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 160–162.

⁶³ In May 1924 the “Vitosha Conference” of the BCP granted to the Pirin region—the only part of Macedonia situated in Bulgaria—the right of territorial secession: BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 238–243. Tellingly, the conference stated that the population of this region “felt” Macedonia to be a distinct country (*otdelna strana*).

⁶⁴ Alexandros Dagkas and Giorgos Leontiadis, *Komintern kai Makedoniko zitima. To Elliniko paraskinio, 1924* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro, 2008); Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, 68–87; Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 114–143.

⁶⁵ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 442–447; 467.

⁶⁶ Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, 81.

1924 the latter signed the “May Manifesto” calling for the establishment of a Macedonian state as a link between the Balkan peoples.⁶⁷ The tone of the document is largely influenced by communist rhetoric: it condemns the “chauvinist,” “annexationist” and “imperialist” Balkan governments, calls for the creation of a pan-Balkan “united revolutionary front” and declares support for the “progressive-revolutionary movements” in Europe. Another feature of it is even more striking. The manifesto uses exclusively the terms “Macedonians,” “Macedonian population” and “Macedonian people”: the last one is even distinguished as separate from the “Bulgarian people.” Paradoxically perhaps, while the Bulgarian communists were increasingly successful in promoting their own platform on the Macedonian question—deemed nationalist by other Balkan communists—their rhetoric was in fact becoming *less and less* Bulgarian nationalist. This process became obvious in subsequent years.

As the IMRO leader Todor Aleksandrov disavowed his signature on the May Manifesto and under his successor, Ivan Mihaylov,⁶⁸ the Macedonian organization became ruthlessly anti-communist, the Comintern functionaries created in 1925 their own IMRO, called IMRO (United). While it had the task of promoting the Balkan policy of the international communist headquarters, the organization was practically controlled by the Bulgarian communists.⁶⁹ Neither their Yugoslav nor their Greek comrades were consulted before its creation: it was clearly imposed on the Communist Party of Yugoslavia and the Communist Party of Greece, despite the reservations of some of their activists.⁷⁰ Although the IMRO (United) never succeeded in extending its influence over large parts of the Macedonian population, the analysis of its ideology is important, as it shows the development of the communist commitment, that of the Comintern and of the BCP, to Macedonian nationalism. Some of its leaders also became important in the long run, either as political activists, or at least as symbolic figures mentioned in later historical accounts.

Even without making a thorough discourse analysis of the publications and of the documents of the organization, one can easily observe that expressions such as “Macedonian people” and “Macedonian population”

⁶⁷ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 216–222.

⁶⁸ Aleksandrov was killed in August 1924, probably also because of his negotiations with the communists.

⁶⁹ Decho Dobrinov, *VMRO (obedinena)* (Sofia: Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 1993), 41–42.

⁷⁰ See Todor Zografski and Dančo Zografski, *KPJ i VMRO (obedineta) vo Vardarska Makedonija vo periodot 1920–1930* (Skopje: INI, 1974), 138–139.

definitely replaced the traditional references to "Macedonian Bulgarians" (which were never abandoned, for instance, by the right-wing IMRO).⁷¹ In the language of the IMRO (United), the term "Bulgarian" was gradually modified with adjectives such as "reactionary," "chauvinist" and, finally, "fascist": these were the designations used, for instance, for the IMRO of Mihaylov and for the governments in Sofia. Conversely, "Macedonian" was increasingly tied to words like "revolutionary," "progressive," and "people's" (*narodnen*). As early as October 1925, the first public declaration of the IMRO (United) underlined the oppressed status of the "Macedonian people" in the three Balkan states, mainly in Bulgaria.⁷²

However, the question of the Macedonian (ethno)national identity remained largely confused. From the very beginning, some of the activists of the IMRO (United) claimed the distinct national character of the Macedonians, but in their arguments the old supra-national doctrine comes through: they still referred to Macedonians "regardless of their confession and nationality" and not to ethnic Macedonians as a distinct element.⁷³ The idea that the Macedonians were ethno-culturally different was, however, promoted in August 1928 by the Bulgarian Comintern functionary Vasil Kolarov. At the Eighth (and last) Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation, Kolarov announced that the Bulgarian bourgeoisie was engaging in "assimilation" of the "Macedonian population" in the Petrich department (the Pirin region).⁷⁴ But in a draft addressed to the Balkan communist parties and elaborated by the Balkan Communist Federation in August–September 1928, reference is made to a "Macedonian population of Bulgarian, Turkish, Jewish and Aromanian origin" in Greece.⁷⁵ At the same time, in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia, the document refers only to "Macedonians" and the "Macedonian population."

⁷¹ See Ivan Katardžiev, ed., *VMRO (Obedineta). Dokumenti i materijali*, vols. 1–2 (Skopje: INI, 1991–1992); Ivan Katardžiev, ed., *Makedonskata nacionalno-politička misla meĝu dvete svetski vojni* (Skopje: Kultura, 1991).

⁷² *BKP, Kominternät i Makedonskiyat väpros*, 485–491.

⁷³ See Pavel Shatev's "Makedonskoto natsionalno osvoboditelno dvizhenie. Edna harakteristika," *Makedonsko delo*, February 10, 1926. The resolutions voted by the First General Conference of the IMRO (United) in July 1929 include a reference to "the non-Bulgarian Macedonian population," which also presupposes the existence of a "Macedonian Bulgarian" one. This impression is confirmed by the fact that, in the same document, the old Internal Macedonian(-Adrianopolitan) Revolutionary Organization, the one from the Ottoman period, is criticized for having had a "purely Macedono-Bulgarian character": *BKP, Kominternät i Makedonskiyat väpros*, 653–654.

⁷⁴ *BKP, Kominternät i Makedonskiyat väpros*, 602–609.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 624–631.

Nevertheless, even in 1930, the newspaper of the Federation, *La Fédération balkanique*—edited by Dimitar Vlahov, the IMRO (United) leader—attacked the theory about the Macedonian Slavic ethnicity of the Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić and affirmed the Bulgarian ethnic character of the “majority of the Macedonian population.”⁷⁶ Given all these contradictory statements, one can understandably be perplexed by the concept of “Macedonians” shared by the Balkan agencies of the Comintern by the end of the 1920s.

In general, their discourse generously granted the right of self-determination, and it tended to put pell-mell in the same rubric nations in “oppressed” status but also multinational regions, with many “oppressed” communities, each one related to traditional irredentisms of neighboring states. There was clearly a collision between the internationalist ideology of the communists—which prevented them from supporting explicitly “bourgeois” irredentist policies—and the attempt to instrumentalize nationalism under the mask of the Leninist principle of self-determination. As a result, the number of the “oppressed” with their own “national questions” increased dramatically. In an article on the national-revolutionary movements in the Balkans from October 1928,⁷⁷ Georgi Dimitrov speaks of the following “national questions”: “Macedonian, Thracian, Dobrudjan and Albanian” (*sic!*) as well as “Bessarabian, Croatian, Montenegrin, Dalmatian, Slovene, Transylvanian, Bucovinian.” In this context, it is obviously difficult to measure the degree to which the Macedonians were considered (ethno)nationally distinct. Was their case more similar to that of the “Dobrudjans” or the “Bucovinians,” or instead to that of Croats or the Albanians?

Dimitrov certainly did not imagine a distinct nation behind each of the “national questions” he listed. He did not refer to separate “Thracians” and “Dobrudjans” when speaking of Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey and Romania, but he did refer to “Macedonians” when discussing the situation in Serbia, as well as to the “local Macedono-Slavic population” in Greece. In Dimitrov’s treatment of Bulgaria there is also a certain “ethnicizing” of the concept of Macedonians. He reproached the Bulgarian bourgeoisie for considering the Macedonians from the Pirin region to be a “pure Bulgarian population”: the Petrich area is considered to be “oppressed” by a

⁷⁶ “Makedonskiyat sfinks,” *Balkanska federatsiya*, March 20, 1930, quoted by Tsăr-nushanov, *Makedonizmăt i săprotivata na Makedoniya sreshtu nego*, 124–125.

⁷⁷ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 617–624.

regime that is “more onerous and harsher” than in the other parts of the country.

But there is still a touch of hesitation: Dimitrov refers to the “similarity of language and culture” between Bulgarians and Macedonians (allegedly used by the Bulgarian bourgeoisie in its nationalist claims), and he draws the conclusion that, in the Petrich area, “national oppression” is practiced “mostly through economic spoliation and political oppression.” Kolarov’s idea of the “assimilation” of Macedonians in Bulgaria seems downplayed but not completely excluded.

Dimitrov’s discourse is certainly difficult to parse, but it does seem that, although the Bulgarian communist leader used the term “Macedonians” and avoided reference to “Bulgarians” in Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia, he was still reluctant to imagine (ethno)nationally oppressed Macedonians in Bulgaria. In his use of the notion of a “Macedono-Slavic population” in Greece, there is certainly a nod to the Greek communists, who were already accused in their country of backing the Bulgarian irredentist aspirations. But the accent on the economic and class “oppression” of the Macedonians in Bulgaria and the indication of their ethno-cultural “similarity” with the Bulgarians instead shows the “politically correct” character of the usage of the term “Macedonians.”

The communists’ Leninist rhetoric, however, imposed national content on the idea of class struggle against “oppression” in the problematic region. In July 1929 the branch of the IMRO (United) in the Bulgarian/Pirin Macedonia characterized the latter as a “colony of Bulgaria,” subjected to merciless exploitation both by the bourgeois state and by the right-wing IMRO of Ivan Mihaylov.⁷⁸ A month or so later, the Second Enlarged Plenum of the CC of the BCP defined Pirin Macedonia—as well as the Bulgarian part of Thrace—as nationally “enslaved” (*porobenite*) regions. The members of the party were exhorted to support the struggle of the “Macedonians” and the “Thracians” in Bulgaria for self-determination until their secession and reunification in independent states. Similar slogans were accepted also for Dobrudja and—conspicuously enough—for the Western Outlands (*Zapadni pokraynini*), the areas of Serbia (Tsaribrod and Bosilegrad) populated by Bulgarian ethnic majorities.⁷⁹ In these last cases, the BCP was almost openly subscribing to a Bulgarian irredentist agenda. And the equal treatment of the “Western Outlands” case, as well

⁷⁸ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 646–652.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 688.

as of the Dobrudjan, with the Macedonian, again shows a lack of commitment to a separate Macedonian national identity. In an address to the CC of the BCP from May 1931, Georgi Dimitrov once again identified as analogous the cases of the Macedonian, Thracian and Dobrudjan “populations,” “masses” and “peoples,” while calling for their secession from the “oppressor states.”⁸⁰

Finally, how can we define this peculiar relationship between communism, Bulgarian nationalism and Macedonian nationalism? It is clear that, at least initially, the national program of the Bulgarian communists was directed by a “soft irredentism.” The BCP was not inclined to abandon those whom it considered compatriots in Dobrudja, in Thrace and in Macedonia to the “assimilationist” policies of Bucharest, Athens and Belgrade. Despite the internationalist slogans, it did not offer the same population to the authority of the “brotherly” Balkan communist parties. On the contrary, thanks to their position in the Comintern and in the Balkan Communist Federation, the Bulgarian leaders obliged the same parties to give their support to “national-liberation” organizations like the IMRO (United). Then—concerning more specifically Dimitrov’s and Kolarov’s intention—was it not to put the Balkans under Bulgarian communist control? If so, despite the success of their line, they nevertheless advocated the existence of separate Dobrudjan, Thracian and Macedonian “peoples.” And, at least in the case of the Macedonians, there was a clear trend toward the recognition of their (ethno)national distinctiveness. Then were the Bulgarian communists instead “national nihilists” who did not object to the proliferation of “new nations” in place of the Bulgarians?

The answer to each of these questions is most likely negative. The Bulgarian communists did not cease to be “patriots,” educated with the traditional narratives of the official Bulgarian national history and ideology. However, though their mindset might have been somewhat nationalist, they did not cease to be communists and “internationalists.” As such, they were not able to back any expansionist “chauvinist” policy. They also had to take into account the position of their fellow communists in

⁸⁰ BKP, *Kominternät i Makedonskiyat väpros*, 796–797. In August 1933 the Fourth Enlarged Plenum of the CC of the BCP approved a manifesto to the “Macedonian, Thracian, Dobrudjan and Western Outlands” comrades [*sic!*—*zapadnopokrainsi*] in support of their “national and social liberation,” which is, of course, expressed in relation with the “struggle of the working class against fascism”: BKP, *Kominternät i Makedonskiyat väpros*, 844–846.

the Balkans, who often held different ideas about the national composition of the problematic regions—and, especially, on the identity of the Macedonian population. The vagueness of terms like “people,” “population,” “nationality,” “nation” and “self-determination” in Marxist-Leninist discourse also played a certain role in the formation of the Bulgarian communist line.⁸¹ Furthermore, the Soviet practice in “solving” national questions through the indigenization policy (*korenizatsiya*) tended to privilege the ethno-cultural aspect of national identity.

Finally, one must also take into consideration the processes of Macedonian national emancipation underway: they were intertwined with the communist policy without necessarily being inspired by it. It would be quite erroneous to see these processes—as most Bulgarian historians do—as a phenomenon fully orchestrated by Moscow (or by both Moscow and Belgrade). During the 1920s and early 1930s, different factions within the Macedonian movement—in particular that in Bulgaria—developed patterns of Macedonian identity more or less emancipated from Bulgarian identity. This was the case with the “Federalists” and of other wings and individuals with whom the communists maintained communication and whom they finally won over to the Comintern’s cause.

These Macedonian activists were the “schismatics” from the “mainstream” Macedonian movement in Bulgaria, represented by the right-wing IMRO. With the latter they were leading, literally, a bloody struggle in which many of them perished. The activists in question demonstrated a salient Macedonian identity that they contrasted to their rival Aleksandrov’s and Mihaylov’s organization, which they stigmatized as an instrument of Sofia’s policy. Thus their Macedonian nationalism (or quasi-nationalism) was itself intertwined with their weak position as persecuted “dissidents”: one can say that in their case, the identity categories were shaped by a purely political struggle. In turn, the communist recognition of Macedonian national distinctiveness would strengthen it further.

This recognition was made official in January 1934 through a resolution on the Macedonian question and on the activity of the IMRO (United) adopted by the Political Secretariat of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. The act was preceded by a series of steps: as early as November 1932, the questions about the existence of a Macedonian nation and

⁸¹ As Yannis Sygkelos argues, despite the numerous communist musings on the “national question,” Marxian theory prevented systematic theoretical analysis of nationalism: Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left*, 9–13.

a Macedonian *language* were debated at the international communist headquarters.⁸² In February 1933 it confirmed that the “Macedonian and Thracian regions” in Bulgaria were nationally “enslaved.”⁸³ Later that year, this thesis was confirmed by the BCP, which—in accordance with the new line of the Comintern—abandoned the traditional slogan of the Balkan Federation: the self-determination of Macedonia and Thrace was supposed to be accomplished without the creation of a new supra-national union. Naturally, the IMRO (United) also subscribed to this line. Moreover, its leaders decided that, from a national point of view, the Macedonians were different from the Bulgarians.⁸⁴ This was certainly the only logical manner to maintain the preceding thesis that the Pirin region was enduring national oppression (*natsionalen gnet*). From IMRO (United), the question of the Macedonian identity returned to the Comintern, or more precisely, to its Balkan Secretariat.

The Comintern’s January 1934 resolution referred to the existence of a separate Macedonian nation and Macedonian language.⁸⁵ The last aspect shows quite an “ethnic” understanding of national identity, which is present in the Stalinist emphasis on a “common language” (together with territory, economic life, “psychological makeup” and “common culture”) as a basic characteristic of the nation. As Stalin wrote in his classic treatise from 1913, there is “no nation that speaks several languages at the same time” (*Net natsii, kotoraya by govorila srazu na raznyh yazykah*).⁸⁶ Language standardization was also an essential tool in Soviet indigenization policies.

Hence the communist concept of the “Macedonian nation” differed fundamentally from the previous supranational concepts of “Macedonian people” used throughout the history of the Macedonian liberation movement: it no longer covered all the “national elements” of the region but only the “Macedonian Slavs,” here deemed ethnically different both from Bulgarians and Serbs. The resolution of the Political Secretariat of the ECCI attacked in particular “Bulgarian chauvinism” which, “using the similarity between the Macedonian and the Bulgarian language, proclaims that

⁸² BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 854.

⁸³ See *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakiyskite bălgari 1878–1944*, vol. 4 (Sofia: Makedonski nauchen institut, Institut po Istoriya pri BAN, 2003), 322–326.

⁸⁴ See Ristovski, *Istoriya na makedonskata nacija*, 566.

⁸⁵ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 881–884.

⁸⁶ *Marksizm i natsional'nyy vopros*, first published in *Prosveshchenie* 3–5 (March–May 1913).

[the Macedonians] are Bulgarians and, in this way, justifies the regime of occupation in the Petrich Macedonian area..." In the reference to "the similarity of language," one can see the aforementioned statements of Dimitrov.

The Comintern's act has provoked diverging historiographical interpretations. Bulgarian historiography, especially nowadays—after the fall of the communist regime—refers to it frequently in order to denounce the Macedonian national identity as an "artificial construction" invented by the communist headquarters in Moscow and/or by the BCP, Georgi Dimitrov and Vasil Kolarov. Macedonian historiography rarely refers to the document, but on those occasions when it is cited, it is considered a "natural" consequence "imposed" by the process of national maturation of the Macedonians.⁸⁷ Yet the story is certainly more complicated.

It is doubtful that the Comintern administrators had such a clear vision of the identity issues in Macedonia. Actually, quite the opposite is confirmed by the memoirs of Dimitar Vlahov, the IMRO (United) leader whose intervention seems instrumental in the adoption of this resolution.⁸⁸ The trend to identify the Macedonian case with others like that of Thrace or Dobrudja, clear in the Comintern's discourse, only confirms the administrators' vagueness. However, as confirmed again by Vlahov, the national emancipation of the left-leaning and communist Macedonian activists has certainly shaped the formula blessed by the world communist headquarters. Hence, one cannot speak of a purely communist invention with no connection to reality. At the same time, far from being truly concerned with the actual aspirations of the Macedonians, the 1934 resolution was certainly a part of a political conjuncture that soon changed.

As is well known, the Seventh Congress of the Comintern (July–August 1935) launched the creation of "popular fronts" with leftist and bourgeois democratic parties on an antifascist basis. The new line authorized and even encouraged certain "patriotic" discourse in the propaganda of the communist parties. It must be noted that the main report at the congress was delivered by Georgi Dimitrov, who was actually the chief promoter of the popular-front tactics.⁸⁹ In his speech, Dimitrov explicitly attacked "national nihilism"—a concept that would enjoy a long future, particularly in the rhetoric of the Bulgarian communist regime between the 1960s

⁸⁷ Ristovski, *Istorija na makedonskata nacija*, 580.

⁸⁸ *Memoari na Dimitar Vlahov*, 355–358.

⁸⁹ McDermott and Agnew, *The Comintern*, 132.

and the 1980s. From this moment on, the communists tried to inscribe their “antifascist” activity in the long continuity of the national history and presented themselves as heirs of indigenous radical-democratic traditions. National-romantic images of allegedly patriotic outlaws like the South Slavic and Romanian *hajduks/hayduti/haiduci* or the Greek *klephts* were especially instrumentalized in the communist discourse.⁹⁰

The leadership of the BCP immediately embraced the new tactics at its Sixth Plenum in February 1936. In its rhetoric, an emphatic patriotism was added to the already existing defense of the “people’s interests” against the manipulations of the “treacherous bourgeoisie.” The national program also changed: the party had to take into account the fact that the Comintern had stopped calling for the dissolution at all costs of the existing nation-states. This was valid also for the Bulgarian neighbors. Yet it did not mean abandoning the Bulgarian claims regarding groups of population in these countries—quite the contrary. By the end of 1936, the Workers’ Party—the legal representative of the BCP—called for equal rights for the “Bulgarian minorities” in Romania, Yugoslavia and Greek Thrace, and even for the return to Bulgaria of Southern Dobrudja and of the Western Outlands.⁹¹ Obviously, it was only in the last case that speaking of a “Bulgarian minority” in Yugoslavia was acceptable: the separate national identity of the Macedonians and their right to have their own state was confirmed.

In short, the declaration shows two important transformations that would not be seriously reconsidered through the years just before and during World War II. On the one hand, the new agenda of the international communist movement—the establishment of popular fronts—entailed a certain tolerance toward the canonical aims of Bulgarian irredentism. On the other, the Macedonian case was clearly distinguished from that of Thrace and Dobrudja. The slogan of self-determination of the “Thracians” and the “Dobrudjans” was discarded: they were treated again as parts of the Bulgarian population. This change certainly cannot be explained without taking into account both the complexity of the Macedonian case (the “apple of discord” between Greeks, Bulgarians and Yugoslavs) and the identity evolutions inside Macedonia that had no parallel in Thrace or Dobrudja. As early as 1927, the newspaper of the IMRO (United) indicated that the members of the young generation in the part of Macedonia

⁹⁰ See Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left*, 63–65.

⁹¹ *Natsionalno-osvoboditelnoto dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakijskite bălgari*, vol. 4, 329.

under Serbian/Yugoslav rule were developing a Macedonian national consciousness irrespectively of their origin ("Bulgarian" according to the terminology of the periodical, Vlach, or other).⁹² The development of a local partisan movement against the Bulgarian occupation during World War II would show that this impression was not wrong. And as already mentioned, the Macedonian activists in Bulgaria close to the Communist Party were just as emancipated.

However, the exact political status of "free" Macedonia was becoming less clear. The traditional ideal of "Balkan Federation," inherited from the late-nineteenth century Balkan social democracy, was abandoned with the ECCI resolution on the Macedonian nation in 1934. At the same time, the popular-front tactics of the Comintern also tended to discard the slogan of "independent Macedonia" as "harmful" at that particular time. The result was utter confusion among the Balkan communists. In 1937 new guidelines elaborated by the Bulgarian communists Vasil Kolarov and Vladimir Poptomov—the latter was also leader of the IMRO (United)—called for the creation of a "Macedonia for Macedonians" but without specifying its exact political form.⁹³ In fact, by then, the Macedonian "agency" of the Comintern—the IMRO (United)—was itself disbanded by the international communist headquarters as being useless given the new developments. As the next part of this study will show, the absence of a precise program for the future of Macedonia led to a nationalist dispute between the Balkan communists during World War II.

The evolution of the BCP's interwar policy concerning the Macedonian question can give the impression of a historical dialectic, worthy of real Marxists. This was represented in the party's numerous manifestos, resolutions and other documents. As a result of this dialectical turn, the initial concern with "the parts of the Bulgarian people" who had fallen under foreign "national and class oppression," in particular in Macedonia, finished with a clear recognition of Macedonians as a distinct nation even inside Bulgaria. On the eve of World War II, Macedonian nationalism flourished in activist milieus related to the Bulgarian Communist Party—like the Macedonian Literary Circle in Sofia. Its members took on the task of creating Macedonian literature, and they researched the history and the

⁹² *Makedoniya. Sbornik ot dokumenti i materiali*, 727.

⁹³ *BKP, Kominternât i Makedonskiyat vâpros*, 1000.

folklore of Macedonians⁹⁴—even if many of them were able to express themselves only in the Bulgarian language.

As already stated, the reasons for this about-face of the BCP's national program were certainly complex. Comintern tactics to "recruit" national-liberation movements for the cause of world communism failed as early as 1924, after the dominant Macedonian organization—the IMRO—discarded the May Manifesto. From this moment on, the party's line was clearly intertwined with groups and individuals in an inferior and vulnerable position within the Macedonian movement based in Bulgaria. It was these activists who developed Macedonian nationalism: initially, what they were rejecting was the official state nationalism and "chauvinism" of the Bulgarian state, but gradually they emancipated themselves from the Bulgarian national identity as such. However, this emancipation happened *in* and *thanks to* an ideological osmosis with communism: it was not an independent force that was only searching for an ally and found, by chance, sympathetic communist parties.

Yet does the support by the latter mean that they had completely given up their "traditional" nationalisms? Did, for instance, the BCP renounce its Bulgarian national(ist) goals for the sake of a straightforward internationalism? Did it really favor, in a "nationally nihilistic" way, the ultimate separation and loss of Macedonia—Bulgaria's primary irredentist dream?

According to the anti-communist polemicists in Bulgaria today, this is exactly what the BCP did. Strong evidence of the communist "national treason" is, along with its interwar national program, the official policy of the Bulgarian state after the coming to power, in September 1944, of the "Fatherland Front" (Otechestven front or OF), a version of the popular front advocated by Dimitrov ten years earlier. The new authorities in Sofia entered into negotiations with the "people's" Yugoslavia of Josip Broz Tito with the aim of creating a big federation of the South Slavs, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea. The stakes again included the future of Macedonia and the "unification" of its three geographic parts.⁹⁵ The small Pirin region, which has been part of Bulgaria ever since the Balkan Wars, was prepared by the OF and the PCB leaders to one day join the newly proclaimed Macedonian republic in the framework of Yugoslavia.

⁹⁴ See Mihail Smatrakalev, *Makedonskiot literaturnen kružok* (Skopje: Misl, 1993).

⁹⁵ The project of Bulgarian-Yugoslav federation has been studied by many authors. See, for instance, Milcho Lalkov, *Ot nadezhda kăm razocharovanie. Ideyata za federatsiya v balkanskiya Yugoiztok (1944–1948 g.)* (Sofia: Vek 22, 1994); Novica Veljanovski, *Makedonija vo jugoslovensko-bugarskite odnosi 1944–1953* (Skopje: INI, 1998).

For that reason, the communist authorities took a series of measures to establish the “cultural autonomy” of the Pirin area: the propaganda stressing the “Macedonian character” of the region was intensified in 1947, with the introduction of the Macedonian language and of the history of the “Macedonian people” as subjects taught at the local schools, and with the opening of a Macedonian theater, bookstores and so on. In December 1946, the vast majority of the Pirin population, as well as a number of former immigrants from the Greek and the Yugoslav parts of Macedonia, were registered as ethnic Macedonians by the first census in communist Bulgaria.⁹⁶ This context only reinforced the anti-communist evaluation of the BCP’s rule as “anti-national”: the communists had supported the “loss of national sovereignty” and the ditching of Bulgarian “statehood traditions” for the sake of an internationalist South Slavic federation, and they had initiated a “de-nationalization” of Bulgarian citizens. All this happened at a time when official propaganda constantly castigated “bourgeois Greater Bulgarian chauvinism.”

But again, the situation is more complex. While, since the autumn of 1944, the Yugoslav Macedonian leaders constantly insisted on the immediate unification of the Pirin region with their country, the Bulgarian leaders reacted with extreme caution and opposed the attempts to transform Pirin into “state within a state.”⁹⁷ At the same time, Sofia tried to make the cession of the Pirin area contingent on the return of the Western Outlands. Finally, during the Bled negotiations (July–August 1947), the Bulgarians succeeded in imposing their visions on the unification of Macedonia: it was to be done after—not before—the Bulgarian-Yugoslav union, and simultaneously with the restitution of the Western Outlands. Moreover, while Tito’s administration proposed the integration of Bulgaria into Yugoslavia as the seventh republic, with a status identical to that of Serbia, Croatia or Macedonia, Sofia’s leaders insisted on the establishment of an Austro-Hungarian-type federation, in which Bulgaria and the existing Yugoslavia would have equal political status.

The “cultural autonomy” of Pirin, so often indicated by the anti-communist analysts in Bulgaria, was in fact a replica of the Soviet practices of indigenization (*korenizatsiya*). That is, despite all the anti-“chauvinist” and internationalist rhetoric, the task in that case was the reinforcement—

⁹⁶ Traditionally instrumentalized by Macedonian polemicists, the 1946 census has been well researched by Bulgarian historians. See, in particular, Angelov, *Hronika na edno nacionalno predateilstvo*.

⁹⁷ TsDA/1-b/6/2/3–4; TsDA/1-b/6/4/8.

not abandonment—of communist control over the targeted population. Indeed, the BCP encouraged and even imposed in Pirin a non-Bulgarian identity, and the ultimate goal of the campaign was the cession of territory to “unified Macedonia.” But this was to be done in the framework of a state federation in which Bulgaria was going to participate. The project was far from “nationally treacherous”: the available party documentation speaks constantly of the urgency to consolidate Bulgarian state authority in the Pirin region and of the need to prevent the establishment of a political border between the region and Bulgaria.⁹⁸

In any case, the national policy of the Bulgarian communists during the first three decades of their existence was ambiguous. In their heavily ideological *langue de bois*, communism and nationalism were interconnected in such (often paradoxical) ways that—despite the contradictions between them—neither of the two poles was sacrificed. One cannot say that the BCP was unilaterally internationalist and even less that it was a-national or “nationally nihilistic” (the last expression was itself part of Dimitrov’s vocabulary). Yet it is difficult to argue that it was plainly nationalist and irredentist.⁹⁹ The communist leaders were instead trying to reconcile the political agenda of the larger international context in which they were involved with the patriotic imperatives taken for granted *via* their national(ist) education and culture. Until the end of the 1940s, this synthesis was rife with contradiction. Later developments, however, showed how far the Bulgarian communist rulers were from being anti- or a-national.

A rare opportunity for a reassertion of the national interest concerning the Macedonian question came up with the Tito-Stalin split in 1948,

⁹⁸ See BKP, *Kominternät i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 1278–1284. Last but not least, on a rhetorical level, the communists were trying to present themselves as champions of the “true” national cause. The “chauvinist bourgeoisie” has paradoxically been accused of having sold out the Bulgarian national interests (to German imperialism), of having transformed the country into a “colony,” and so on. See Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left*, 206–208.

⁹⁹ This is how Yannis Sygkelos (*Nationalism from the Left*) tends to interpret its policy. It would certainly be strange to subsume under the term “nationalism” even paeans of loyalty to the Soviet Union such as Dimitrov’s famous statement that friendship with the USSR was as necessary as the “sun and air for a living organism.” Indeed, even in declarations of this kind (frequently brought up today by anti-communist critics), one can find “patriotic” argumentation and references to the “national independence and prosperity” of Bulgaria. However, it is questionable to what extent nationalist logic can be found behind such rhetoric and to what extent its “patriotism” was instead a classical tool of political legitimization of a not-necessarily-popular cause. Of course, the ideological language of the communists was quite successful in presenting every necessity of the day as part of the “national interest,” as Sygkelos shows perfectly well.

in which the BCP immediately took the Soviet side. Already in Bucharest, during the Second Session of the Cominform, where the leaders of Yugoslavia were accused of treason toward the “socialist front,” Traycho Kostov, the secretary of the CC of the BCP, vigorously denounced the Yugoslav “nationalist” policy in Macedonia. Two supreme forums of the party in 1948 (the Sixteenth Plenum of the CC and the Fifth Congress) quickly marked a certain reorientation in the recognition of a Macedonian national identity. The label “chauvinism,” previously used for the Bulgarian “bourgeoisie,” was immediately foisted upon the Yugoslav communist rulers as well as upon the “agents of Skopje” with *their* “nationalist propaganda” in the Pirin region. Georgi Dimitrov even declared that the population there spoke only Bulgarian and that “since time immemorial, it feels related to . . . the Bulgarian people and does not want to part from it.” He likewise condemned the authorities of Yugoslav Macedonia for having staged “a systematic campaign against all things Bulgarian” in their country.¹⁰⁰

For another decade, the official stance on Macedonian identity remained ambiguous. On the one hand, the communist state took all possible measures to consolidate its “statehood” in the Pirin region. Until 1955—and especially up to Stalin’s death in 1953—Bulgaria actively participated in the propaganda war of the Cominform against Yugoslavia, which was more than useful for its specific need to reassert a more patriotic position on the Macedonian question. The Macedonian national identity—in its definitive version developed in the framework of Yugoslavia—was rejected: this holds true in particular for the Macedonian standard language, castigated as “Serbified” as early as 1948. But on the other hand, Sofia continued to recognize a Macedonian population in the Pirin area: in the propaganda language of the early 1950s, both “Titoism” (“Tito fascism,” Yugoslav “chauvinism”) and “Mihaylovism” (that is, the Bulgarian “chauvinism” of IMRO/Ivan Mihaylov pattern) were condemned.¹⁰¹ Inside Bulgaria, the party authorities tried to inculcate some sort of Macedonian identity, but different from that of Yugoslav Macedonians and as close

¹⁰⁰ See the collection of documents *Makedonskiyat vāpros v bālgaro-yugoslavskite otnosheniya (1944–1952 g.)* (Sofia, Universitetsko izdatelstvo, 2004), 458–463. This stance of Dimitrov (who died in 1949) certainly contributed to the Macedonian leader Vlahov’s evaluation of him (as well as of Vasil Kolarov) as a “Bulgarian nationalist”: *Memoari na Dimitar Vlahov*, 365.

¹⁰¹ See the statements by Pirin-area party authorities that show their perplexity on this issue: ODA (Regional Archive—Blagoevgrad)/2-b/1/5/511; ODA/2-b/1/541/67.

as possible to Bulgarians. They even attempted to use the recognition of such identity against Yugoslavia.¹⁰²

Todor Zhivkov's acquisition of supreme power from 1956 on cut off the futile efforts. In the early 1960s, the official line of Sofia concerning all things Macedonian finally became clear. The communist power firmly rejected the existence of Macedonians in Bulgaria but also the historical foundations of the separate identity claimed by the Macedonians in the Yugoslav republic: both were (again) proclaimed ethnic Bulgarians. Zhivkov's national policy dredged up all the traditional "bourgeois" and "chauvinist" argumentation concerning the history and the ethnic belonging of the Slav-speaking population in geographical Macedonia.¹⁰³ Endless disputes followed between Bulgarian and Yugoslav party and state leaders, historians, journalists, linguists, writers and ethnographers on the identity of a long series of historical personalities from Macedonia, as well as on the meaning of historical events from the Middle Ages until World War II. The Politburo and the Secretariat of the CC of the BCP tirelessly issued a stream of guidelines, theses, directives and resolutions summoning all possible state institutions and cultural and research institutes (the Academy of Sciences, universities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the media, the secret services, even the Bulgarian Orthodox Church) to denounce the "falsification of history" by the Yugoslav Macedonians and to propagate their unshakable ethnic Bulgarian belonging.¹⁰⁴

As some analysts have noted, the aggressively nationalist tones of the "Macedonian" quarrel between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were unparalleled in the other political-historiographic arguments between Eastern

¹⁰² As witnessed by the "Theses" on the Macedonian question elaborated by the end of 1951 by the party and state official—and former IMRO (United) activist—Vladimir Poptomov: TsDA/1-b/64/160.

¹⁰³ The new-old line was formulated during a plenum of the CC of the BCP held in March 1963. Its minutes are available in TsDA/1-b/5/568/268–324 and were partially published in *BKP, Kominternăt i makedonskiyat vâpros*, 1286–1294, and by Stoyan Germanov, "Nachaloto na preotsenka na bălgarskata politika po makedonskiya vâpros (1948–1963 g.)," *Makedonski pregled* 1 (2003), 113–136. During the plenum, Zhivkov openly stated his solidarity with the historical and ethnic interpretation of Macedonia previously expressed by the "chauvinist talk" of the Bulgarian "bourgeoisie" (*burzhoaziyata go govoreshe v svoite shovinistichni rechi*).

¹⁰⁴ On the Bulgarian-Macedonian historiographical "wars," see Robert King, *Minorities Under Communism: Nationalities as a Source of Tension among Balkan Communist States* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973); Stefan Troebst, *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967–1982* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1983); Tchavdar Marinov, *La Question macédonienne de 1944 à nos jours. Communisme et nationalisme dans les Balkans* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010).

European communist countries.¹⁰⁵ They certainly show to what extent the Bulgarian communists had not abandoned nationalism. It was present in Dimitrov's period, despite all its ambiguities, and it was completely set free by Zhivkov's "communist nationalism," which, in some respects, even surpassed the standards of the old "bourgeois chauvinism."¹⁰⁶ In the field of the Macedonian question, this was, of course, hardly possible without the existence of an appropriate counterpart.

THE YUGOSLAV COMMUNIST PROJECT AND MACEDONIAN NATIONALISM: IN SEARCH OF A FORMULA OF COMPATIBILITY

The contribution of the Bulgarian communists to the international recognition of the Macedonian nation and to the formation of a part of its ideology (especially of the Macedonian historical narrative) is important. However, it did not generate a real national *movement*. For instance, during World War II, the BCP's policy did not inspire the formation of a Macedonian communist-styled National Liberation Struggle—in the Pirin region at least, if not in the parts of Yugoslav and Greek Macedonia occupied by Sofia. Although mainstream historiography in Skopje normally holds that the (BCP-controlled) partisan movement in the Pirin area was part of the Macedonian National Liberation Struggle (*Narodno-osloboditelna borba* or NOB), recently this thesis was put in question by the Macedonian historian Ivan Katardžiev. According to the researcher (a Pirin native himself), the local communist resistance had an "exclusively social-class and antifascist character (*isključitelno klasno-socijalen i antifašistički karakter*)."¹⁰⁷ As Katardžiev noted, in the Bulgarian context, the question of the existence of a separate Macedonian nation was instead limited to "theoretical debates."¹⁰⁸ At the same time, in the Vardar area of

¹⁰⁵ King, *Minorities Under Communism*, 219.

¹⁰⁶ The "crown" of this policy was undoubtedly the Bulgarianization of the large Turkish minority in 1984–1985, officially called the "Revival process."

¹⁰⁷ Ivan Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini po Ilindenskoto vostanie* (Skopje: Kultura, 2003), 280. So far, the specialists know of only one document where the local partisan commander Nikola Parapunov speaks in a very general manner about "the future of Bulgaria and of Macedonia," without any reference to the national identity of the latter: *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod za samostojnost i nacionalna država*, vol. 2 (Skopje: Univerzitet Kiril i Metodija, 1981), 381–382. Despite this, Parapunov is glorified in the Macedonian mainstream narrative as the one who actually initiated the struggle against "the Bulgarian occupier."

¹⁰⁸ Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 229.

Macedonia, which was part of Yugoslavia before and after the war, thousands of partisans embraced the Macedonian national cause and fought against the Bulgarian occupation. This would certainly have been impossible without the support and the practical organization of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia.

For a long time, the CPY did not have a clear stance on the Macedonian identity—at least not clearer than that of the Bulgarian communists.¹⁰⁹ Established in 1919–1920, the party initially subscribed to the official unitary doctrine of the newly founded Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, that these represented three “tribes” (*plemena*) of essentially the same nation (*narod*). This thesis was certainly not helpful as far as the definition of the Macedonians was concerned: were they part of the same nation? What about the Bulgarians, who also speak a South Slavic language? And what about the non-Slavic Muslim communities in the region around Vardar—Albanians and Turks?

The Yugoslav communists shared diverse ideas on the national composition of Macedonia but were, in general, conscious of its ethnic diversity: the Macedonian question was a “Balkan” question, not strictly Yugoslav. Quite often the activists of the different wings of the CPY emphasized that the Macedonian population was a “mosaic” of national elements, including Bulgarians, Turks, Albanians and Vlachs but also—if not mostly—Serbs. In some versions, the Macedonians were seen as an ethnic “transition” between Serbs and Bulgarians (a thesis inspired by the Serbian geographer Jovan Cvijić and previously accepted by the founder of the Social Democratic Party of Serbia Dimitrije Tucović) or between Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks.

Following the Sixth Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation (during which the “nationally oppressive” character of the Yugoslav state was severely denounced), in January 1924, the Third Conference of the CPY accepted the right of “self-determination” of the peoples inhabiting the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. Thus the party was able to endorse the resolution of the BCF on the Macedonian (and the Thracian) question. Although regarded as oppressed by Belgrade and as asking for self-determination, (Vardar) Macedonia was clearly not treated as a

¹⁰⁹ This question has been the focus of research by the Macedonian authors Kiril Miljovski, *Makedonskoto prašanje vo nacionalnata programa na KPJ (1919–1937)* (Skopje: Kultura, 1962); Aleksandar Hristov, *KPJ vo rešavanjeto na makedonskoto prašanje 1937–1944* (Skopje: Kultura, 1962); Katardžiev, *Vreme na zreenje*, vol. 1, 373–435; and by the Bulgarian Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*.

separate national entity: the text of the resolution referred to Bulgarians, Turks, Albanians and Vlachs and stated that all the neighboring nations were represented in the disputed region, without any of them enjoying an absolute majority.¹¹⁰ The emphasis on the mixed character of Macedonia—on the fact that it was a *macédoine*—surely reflected the Serbian communists' need to oppose Bulgarian irredentism. At the same time, the resolution countered the official "bourgeois" and "nationalistic" assertion that Vardar Macedonia historically constituted part of southern Serbia and that its population was ethnically Serbian.

Very soon, between these two poles a third one crystallized: the ethnic *Macedonian*. The reference to a separate Macedonian element is already visible in a 1924 brochure written by the Yugoslav communist Kosta Novaković.¹¹¹ Yet there the "Macedonians" are paradoxically categorized alongside the "Serbs" and the "Bulgarians" (and the non-Slavic nationalities of the region) as if there were three Slavic elements. The general trend was nevertheless clear: the mention of Bulgarians or Serbs in Vardar Macedonia was gradually abandoned in favor of expressions such as "Macedonian people" and "Macedonians."

This is certainly not unique to the Yugoslav communist discourse: as previously indicated, these were the canonical terms also used in the writings of the Bulgarian communists, as well as in those of the activists of the IMRO (United). However, just as in the last case, the exact meaning of the notions in question was not clear. In many statements made by Yugoslav communists, the term "Macedonian people" sounds instead like a supra-national category, but in others there are also references to a "Macedonian language,"¹¹² which suggests an (ethno)national particularity of the Macedonian Slavs.

The resolution on the Macedonian nation and language adopted in January 1934 by the Political Secretariat of the ECCI made official the latter option: the Fourth Conference of the CPY (December 1934) accepted the existence of a distinct Macedonian national identity and called for the creation "in the near future" of a separate Communist Party of Macedonia. The Bulgarian specialist Kostadin Paleshutki even believes that it was the Yugoslav communists who implanted in Moscow the idea that the Macedonians were neither Bulgarians nor Serbs: throughout the 1920s,

¹¹⁰ Paleshutki, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 123–125.

¹¹¹ Kosta Novaković, *Makedonija Makedoncima! Zemlja zemljoradnicima!* (Belgrade: NRPJ, 1924).

¹¹² Paleshutki, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 178–179.

there were complaints by representatives of the CPY and also of the Communist Party of Greece that the reference to "Bulgarians" in Macedonia favored Greater Bulgarian aspirations.¹¹³ Indeed, both the Greek and the Yugoslav communists were stigmatized in their countries as traitors to the national cause who promoted Bulgarian irredentism in Macedonia.¹¹⁴ From this point of view, the designation of the Macedonian population as simply "Macedonian" was perhaps expedient for the two parties. Nevertheless, it would be exaggerated to see the elimination of the reference to "Macedonian Bulgarians" in these discourses as a clear result of either Greek or Serbian nationalism.

The Yugoslav party was far from being "Serbian." The Yugoslav communists had to come up with ways to handle a number of "national questions," and the Macedonian question was just one of them (although it was certainly very complicated with its Balkan context). The "Serbian chauvinism" traditionally discovered by Bulgarian commentators in every aspect of the Yugoslav communist policy is not visible either in the critiques of "Greater Serbian oppression" or the plans for the disintegration of Yugoslavia supported by the CPY in the early 1930s. In this case, as good internationalists, the Yugoslav activists followed a line blessed by the international communist headquarters. The conspicuous change in the CPY's national program from 1935 on, with the call for the preservation of Yugoslavia, although on a federative basis, again followed the directives coming from Moscow. The new popular-front tactics dictated the consolidation of the antifascist forces in the Balkans: it largely suspended the previous programs of destruction of the existing bourgeois states and allowed a noticeable degree of "patriotism."

In this context, the CPY's endorsement of a separate Macedonian Slavic identity cannot be understood without taking into account the very *existence* of such an identity. During the interwar period, it was surely still in development, and it was getting more and more visible. In the 1920s, in the Vardar region, there was still pro-Bulgarian political activism maintained

¹¹³ Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 214–215.

¹¹⁴ This accusation was perhaps not totally unfounded. In 1920, prior to the elections for the Constitutional Assembly of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the IMRO leader Todor Aleksandrov called on the population of Vardar Macedonia to vote for the communist candidates: finally, the Communist Party was the only one claiming that Macedonia, as far as its ethnic composition was concerned, was not (only) Serbian. As a result, the CPY won a surprisingly high percentage of the votes in the province around the Vardar River. After the municipal elections the same year, Skopje became a "red commune," with the CPY winning a majority of the votes.

by the IMRO and the bands sent by it across the eastern border. However, during the next decade,¹¹⁵ the political and cultural agenda of the local Macedonians became less radical and clearly less pro-Bulgarian. The young Macedonian intellectuals and activists of the 1930s were trying to develop a Macedonian literature and literary language; in the sphere of politics, their claims were limited to the idea of federalization of the existing Yugoslavia, where *Vardar* Macedonia would find its place as a distinct entity.¹¹⁶ This was particularly the case for Macedonians schooled in Yugoslav higher education institutions.

Yet just as in the case of interwar Bulgaria, it is impossible to understand the Macedonian nationalism of the young Yugoslav Macedonians without considering its connection to communism. The most important political expression of this nationalism was again set up with the help of the Communist Party: this was the MANAPO (*Makedonski narodni pokret* or “Macedonian People’s/National Movement,” in Serbo-Croatian). Created in 1936, it was a leftist (“progressive”) organization of Macedonian students in Zagreb and Belgrade and was inspired by the popular-front tactics. The movement opposed the “monarcho-fascist dictatorship” and the “Greater Serbian hegemony” and sought to achieve autonomy for Vardar Macedonia in the framework of an antifascist, federalized Yugoslavia. Like all the popular-front-type movements, the MANAPO was not uniform itself: among the participants were Bulgarian nationalists who later, during the Bulgarian occupation of the region, received important positions. The same heterogeneous milieu in 1937–1938 edited the review *Luč*, which contained numerous texts in Macedonian and historical accounts focusing on the history of the region and of its “Slavs.”¹¹⁷ If in this case, Macedonian (and Bulgarian) nationalism was necessarily camouflaged, on the eve of World War II, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia launched illegal periodicals that expressed it clearly. For instance, *Bilten* and *Iskra* (Skopje, 1940) not only used the Macedonian language but also referred to historical figures like the medieval tsar Samuil or the revolutionary Goce Delčev as Macedonian Slavs.

It is, however, difficult to measure the degree of influence of the Macedonian national identity supported by the Yugoslav communists prior to World War II. The Macedonian nationalist intelligentsia was still being

¹¹⁵ In 1934 the IMRO was banished by the Bulgarian government.

¹¹⁶ As noted by Ivo Banac, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), 327.

¹¹⁷ On *Luč*, see Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 231.

formed—a fact that only helps the Greek and the Bulgarian historians to present the Macedonian identity as a communist product of the (post-) World War II setting. The earliest representatives of this intelligentsia, like the poet Kočo Racin, were most often communists, it is true, but the CPY had relatively few members in Macedonia. The party organizations were virtually nonexistent after a series of arrests in 1937—the moment when Josip Broz Tito took the party leadership.¹¹⁸

The local communists themselves provided part of the explanation for this weakness: the “Macedonian masses” lacked the will to work for the preservation of Yugoslavia, even in a new democratic and “popular” form. In fact, the slogan of “independent Macedonia,” traditionally associated with the right-wing pro-Bulgarian IMRO, had not disappeared even within leftist and communist circles—although it was contrary to the new party line. Under Tito’s leadership, the CPY took on the delicate task of giving the Macedonian national emancipation the “right” political articulation and directing it into the “right” direction: the “common struggle” of all the Yugoslav peoples against class oppression and fascism. By ruling out the idea of Macedonian independence or by postponing it for some ideal time in the future, the official line of the Yugoslav communists also tended to neglect the question of the “unification” of the three parts of geographic Macedonia and to focus only on the Yugoslav/Vardar part.

At the beginning of Yugoslavia’s occupation by Axis forces, the different articulations of Macedonian identity and ideology among local communists—pro- and non-Yugoslav—clashed. Moreover, the “internationalist” relationship between the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian communists almost turned into a conflict. In its origin was the formation, in 1940, of a Regional Committee (*Pokrajinski komitet*) of the CPY in Macedonia headed by Metodi Shatorov/Metodija Šatorov. Also known as Sharlo, Shatorov was a former activist of the IMRO (United), of the BCP (then known as the Bulgarian *Worker’s Party*) and of the Comintern. Often debated in the Bulgarian, Yugoslav (and) Macedonian historical publications, Shatorov’s case indeed deserves a more detailed presentation, as it shows all the entanglement of nationalism and communism in the policies of both the Yugoslav and the Bulgarian communist parties as well as the dilemmas facing Macedonian nationalism during World War II.

Since the very beginning, Sharlo’s Regional Committee recognized a distinct Macedonian national identity: in November 1940, the Committee

¹¹⁸ See Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 256–258.

issued an antimilitarist appeal saying that the Macedonians were “neither Serbs nor Bulgarians but only Macedonians.”¹¹⁹ However, in other documents of the committee, the expression “Macedonian people” (*makedonski narod*) also covers the non-Slavic populations inhabiting the region (Albanians, Turks and Vlachs),¹²⁰ which attests to certain lingering hesitations concerning the exact ethnic contents of the term. In any case, in April–May 1941, thus immediately after the Axis invasion of Yugoslavia and Bulgaria’s occupation of most of Vardar Macedonia, Shatorov unexpectedly cut the links between the Regional Committee and the CPY. Moreover, he put the local communist organization under the authority of the Bulgarian Workers’ Party. He renamed his structure the “Regional Committee of the Workers’ Party in Macedonia” and even expelled its two ethnic Serbian members.

Shatorov’s anti-Yugoslav and visibly pro-Bulgarian actions naturally provoked the anger of the CPY’s leadership, which did not hesitate to send its loyal commissioners (Mara Naceva and Lazar Koliševski) to Macedonia. The conflict between the pro-Yugoslav communists and Sharlo—also labeled in the Yugoslav documents as “the Old Bulgarian”—reached its peak in July 1941 when Tito himself sent a letter to the Regional Committee accusing it of “nationalism,” sabotage of the CPY’s line and counter-revolutionary activity.¹²¹ The last point was not quite true. In the aftermath of the Nazi invasion of the USSR, the Macedonian communists, like all the others, were obliged to organize a partisan resistance movement against the Axis occupiers: as a good communist, Shatorov initiated such a struggle. But he tended to cast it as resistance against the fascist Bulgarian government—not necessarily against the annexation of Vardar Macedonia by Bulgaria. At the same time, the Yugoslav headquarters needed a genuine “national-liberation” movement in Macedonia—just like in the other parts of Yugoslavia.

As a result, Shatorov was excluded from the party but, in turn, his committee excommunicated the Yugoslav representative, Koliševski. The controversy reached all the way to the CPY and BCP leaderships. The fact that the latter did not condemn Shatorov’s policy shows how far the Bulgarian communists were from “national nihilism”: Macedonia was welcome to the BCP’s sphere of jurisdiction, and the party did not seem disposed to

¹¹⁹ *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 190–192.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹²¹ Paleshutki, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 288.

give the region back to the Yugoslav “comrades.” The latter were not likely to give up Macedonia either. Obviously, the conflict around Sharlo had a certain similarity with the “bourgeois” Serbo-Bulgarian quarrel on the historical and ethnic belonging of Macedonia. However, unlike the national bourgeois parties, the communists were able to resort to a higher, international instance: Tito addressed to the Comintern his complaint against Sharlo’s “national chauvinism” and the incorporation of the Macedonian Regional Committee into the BCP.

For strategic reasons, the international communist headquarters pronounced itself in favor of the Yugoslav party. The Regional Committee was restored to Tito, and the Bulgarians had to accept this solution. As a matter of fact, it was balanced enough: the ECCI, whose secretary at that time was the Bulgarian Dimitrov, called for a “close co-operation” between the BCP and the CPY in Vardar Macedonia and, despite its submission to the CPY, the local organization was actually put under a kind of dual Yugoslav-Bulgarian tutelage.¹²² The solution adopted by the international communist leadership undoubtedly shows a certain skepticism concerning the capacity of Macedonian communists to organize a real partisan resistance but probably also doubts over the distinct character of their national identity.¹²³ Concerning the Bulgarian communist leadership, it recognized the “grave political and organizational mistakes” of Shatorov but refused to consider him a “class enemy” or a “counter-revolutionary element” and opposed the capital punishment demanded by the CPY.¹²⁴

Did Sharlo, along with his (former) comrades—the Bulgarian communists—try to “Bulgarianize” the Macedonian communist movement? Macedonian historiography during the Yugoslav communist period answered this question in the affirmative. Yet after 1991, the leader of the regional communist organization was also praised and was officially rehabilitated by a scholarly conference held in 2005 in Skopje. It was decided that Shatorov was a great “Macedonian patriot” and by no means a traitor of “the Macedonian cause.”¹²⁵ How was this revision possible?

¹²² See *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 355.

¹²³ At least according to the Macedonian historian Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 263.

¹²⁴ *BKP, Kominternât i Makedonskiyat vâpros*, 1060–1061. Finally, Shatorov was transferred to Bulgaria, where he spent the war in a partisan detachment and died at the beginning of September 1944 in circumstances that some authors still consider unclear.

¹²⁵ See Viktor Cvetanoski, “Šarlo bil golem Makedonec, a ne predavnik,” *Utrinski vesnik*, November 24, 2005, accessed December 9, 2011, <http://217.16.70.245/default.aspx?proj=1938&stID=57093&pdate=20051124>.

As already mentioned, documents issued by the Macedonian Regional Committee during Shatorov's rule attest to a certain form of Macedonian nationalism. In an open letter from May 1941 signed by Shatorov and known as the "Letter to Stojan," the head of the Regional Committee of "the Workers' Party" traced the continuity of the Macedonians' struggles for "national and political liberation," represented by figures such as the leaders of the Internal Macedonian organization from the Ottoman period (Goce Delčev, Jane Sandanski and Gjorče Petrov).¹²⁶ At the same time, the circular expressed indignation against the Bulgarian regime, which presented Macedonian culture as Bulgarian while replacing, in the local administration, the "Šumadinians" (that is, Serbians) with Bulgarians.

Yet Shatorov's appeal stated that "the Macedonians do not struggle only in order to have their priests and teachers (*popovi i daskali*), be they Bulgarian, Albanian or Vlach. . . ." In this case, one can see that Shatorov was inclined to understand the concept of "Macedonians" in the old supra-national way, typical of the (Macedono-)Bulgarian political tradition: as a community of different "national elements" where the Macedonian Slavs were in fact Bulgarians.

A letter of his addressed to the CC of the BCP attests to his relative indifference, or perhaps exasperation, concerning the issue of Macedonians' ethnicity—particularly the debates over to what extent they constituted a nation different from the Bulgarians. According to him, these "doctrinal and sectarian disputes and provocations" (*doktrinersko sektantski sporove i drazneniya*) had to be ended. Simultaneously, Shatorov criticized what he called the "Greater Macedonian chauvinism" (*velikomakedonski shovinizām*) of the activists who condemned all those who did not feel themselves to be "Macedonian Slavs."¹²⁷ Obviously, he tried to reverse the traditional communist stigmatization of "Greater Bulgarian chauvinism" and to instrumentalize it against the communists with clearly Macedonian (and possibly pro-Yugoslav) nationalism. Moreover, he expressed his opinion that the party organization had to struggle only against the "imperialism" of the official Bulgaria, while he accepted the occupation of Macedonia as a *fait accompli* that, in the eyes of much of "the Macedonian and Bulgarian population," was "the solution to our century-old national questions."

¹²⁶ *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 349–353.

¹²⁷ *BKP, Kominternāt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 1053–1054.

Contrary to the point of view of Macedonian historians today, Shatorov was not necessarily a "Macedonian patriot" as they would define the term. And, again contrary to their interpretation, the BCP was not that nationalist and was not trying to Bulgarianize the Macedonian communist movement by any means possible. In fact, Shatorov's views were not politically correct for the Bulgarian leadership: the secretary of the CC of the BCP Traycho Kostov responded to him that the Macedonians were not at all enthusiastic about the Bulgarian occupation and that the process of their transformation into a distinct "nation" had "gone very far," with over 80 percent of the locals considering themselves Macedonians and not Bulgarians.¹²⁸ Kostov's reply actually shows that, after the Bulgarian occupation of Vardar Macedonia, the Bulgarian communists did not have a coherent program for the political future of the region. While urging a fight against "Greater Bulgarian chauvinism" and "imperialism," Kostov called neither for the return of Macedonia to Yugoslavia nor for its independence.

Apparently, the leaders of the BCP found themselves in a deadlock, as the Comintern had suspended their call for a Balkan Federation, and their demand for an independent Macedonia was revised with the popular-front tactics. At the same time, they did not want to see the region returned to Yugoslavia: in the aftermath of the scandal with Sharlo, in October 1941, the CC of the BCP asked its Yugoslav "comrades" not to identify the situation in Macedonia with that in Serbia or Croatia. The Bulgarian leaders insisted that, apart from certain regions like "Kumanovo, partially Skopje," the local population was not prepared for an "active struggle" against the occupiers, as it detested the former Yugoslavia.¹²⁹ Here, the reference to these specific regions¹³⁰ presupposes that only the Serbophile elements were ready to fight for the cause of the CPY.

To a certain extent the Bulgarian communists were right. The CPY leaders took measures to discipline the Regional Committee in Macedonia, but because their envoy Lazar Koliševski was arrested by the Bulgarian police, the committee was headed by another local activist—Bane Andreev. As a result, Sharlo's story was almost repeated. Under the leadership of Andreev, the Macedonian communists re-established close contact

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1058.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 1063. See Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 264–265.

¹³⁰ The inhabitants of Kumanovo even today speak a peculiar dialect, transitional to Serbian. Both Kumanovo and a part of the Skopje region have the reputation of being largely Serbified, and not only linguistically.

with the BCP. Moreover, they exhorted the population to struggle for “free Macedonia” against the fascist Bulgarian government and monarch but not for a new Yugoslavia. The instructor sent by the CC of the CPY—the Serbian Dragan Pavlović-Šilja—had to accept the lack of reference to the CPY in the proclamations issued by the committee.

Only in September 1942 did the new envoy of the CC, Dobrivoje Radosavljević-Bobi (who also was Serbian), succeed in forming a new regional committee composed of activists loyal to the Yugoslav line. Led by Kuzman Josifovski, the party structure was, however, again obliged to avoid the reference to Yugoslavia. In its proclamations to the local population, it proclaimed itself the “Regional Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia,” even if such a party did not exist yet: Radosavljević explained to the CPY leaders that the Macedonians (aside from the inhabitants of the regions of Azot, Poreče and Skopska Crna Gora) were “incredibly afraid of a return of Yugoslavia,” although they “already” detested the “Greater Bulgarian hegemonists” as well.¹³¹ Thus the Yugoslav activist only confirmed the correctness of the BCP’s assessment from the previous year.¹³²

Apart from the tactical concealment of the dependence of the local party organization from the CPY, the CPY’s envoy suggested a more active instrumentalization, in the local communist propaganda, of historical references and traditional slogans like the “unification of Macedonia.” Thus the CPY’s activists compromised the official line somewhat in order to attract the Macedonian population. Relaunching the slogan of a “unified Macedonia” was not approved by Tito’s headquarters or by Moscow.

At the same time, the Macedonian communists more and more explicitly claimed to be the genuine inheritors and promoters of a specific centuries-old tradition of Macedonians, exemplified by figures such as the creators of the Slavic script Cyril and Methodius, revolutionaries from the Ottoman period like Goce Delčev and events like the Ilinden Uprising or the so-called Kruševo Republic.¹³³ Gradually, the Yugoslav Macedonian partisans constructed a historical continuity linking their own agenda and that of the Macedonian revolutionary movement from the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries: a continuity

¹³¹ Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 298.

¹³² Azot, Poreče and Skopska Crna Gora are traditionally pro-Serbian regions.

¹³³ See *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 375. The Kruševo Republic was a revolutionary government proclaimed during the anti-Ottoman Ilinden Uprising (1903) in the multi-ethnic town of Kruševo, western Macedonia.

postulated also by Macedonian historiography, which speaks of “the Ilinden traditions in the National Liberation Struggle.”¹³⁴ The partisan leaders and detachments chose names of heroes from the Internal Macedonian(-Adrianopolitan) Revolutionary Organization. For instance, Kuzman Josifovski was named “Pitu” after Pitu Guli, the famous (Vlach) defendant of the short-lived Kruševo Republic in 1903.

However, the Macedonian nationalism promoted by the CPY had to be carefully domesticated for the sake of the party’s line. How to achieve the perfect unison between the two agendas was not obvious. Macedonia’s final destiny remained unclear throughout 1942 as a result of the Comintern’s (to a certain extent) compromise solution following the scandal around Shatorov. The BCP had also its representative within the Macedonian partisan headquarters—Boyan Bălgarov—whose figure still provokes the *ressentiment* of the Macedonian historians. In contrast with the CPY’s stance in favor of preserving the former Yugoslavia, Bălgarov declared himself in favor of an “independent and unified Macedonia,” a slogan which is even today considered by Macedonian researchers to be a “very suspicious idea.”¹³⁵ Furthermore, it was the Bulgarian communists who insisted on the creation of a separate Macedonian Communist Party.¹³⁶

In fact, the suspicion of Macedonian historiography concerning the activity of the BCP makes visible the Yugoslav “format” of the Macedonian national identity that the CPY finally succeeded in imposing. It is undoubtedly paradoxical that researchers from an independent Republic of Macedonia still reject as inappropriate the encouragement of independence within the Macedonian partisan resistance during World War II. Yet their reaction represents a relatively good understanding of the motives of the BCP. Even if the latter did not necessarily mean the unambiguous “Bulgarization” of the Macedonian movement (as supposed by certain historians in Skopje), its initiatives did not lack a certain “patriotic” motivation. The Bulgarian communists were clearly not inclined to cede Vardar Macedonia completely to their Yugoslav “brothers” and probably considered the establishment of a Macedonian Communist Party as a means to maintain their influence in the region. The autonomist and essentially

¹³⁴ See, for example, Mihailo Apostolski, *Tradicije na Ilinden i NOB* (Skopje: Radio-Televizija, 1968).

¹³⁵ The expression comes from Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 266.

¹³⁶ Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 262.

pro-Bulgarian policies of Metodi Shatorov and of Bane Andreev only confirm this possibility.

Conscious of such risks, at the beginning of 1943, Tito's leadership decided to avoid them and sent a new special envoy to Macedonia—the Montenegrin Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo. He was supposed to set up a Macedonian Communist Party within the framework of the Yugoslav one. According to the CPY's plan, this structure would be active only on the territory of Vardar Macedonia and would include only activists loyal to the Yugoslav agenda.¹³⁷ Tempo's mission was not without frictions with the Bulgarian representative, but very soon the Yugoslav activist managed to impose himself as the real leader of the Macedonian communist resistance.¹³⁸ In February–March 1943, Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo formed the first Central Committee of the Communist Party of Macedonia (Komunistička Partija na Makedonija), which was supposed to spread the idea of the re-establishment of Yugoslavia under a new democratic and "people's" form.¹³⁹

Ironically, at different times, the concept of the "Macedonian Communist Party" has served the particular interests of both the Bulgarian and the Yugoslav communists. Although suggested by the CPY as early as 1934 (during the party's Fourth Conference), it was a consequence of the Comintern's policy of dissolution of the existing states. For this reason, it was no longer expedient for the patriotic National Liberation Struggle of the Yugoslav communist resistance during the war—the same reason, for which it was, this time, expedient for the Bulgarian communists. In November 1942, the First Session of AVNOJ,¹⁴⁰ held in Bihać (Bosnia), confirmed that the future Yugoslavia would include its prewar territories, including Vardar Macedonia. By then, Tito had explicitly criticized the idea of an autonomous communist party in Macedonia. Yet the need to block the autonomist trends in the region, to better control the local partisan movement and to win more massive support from the population

¹³⁷ Ristovski, *Istorija na makedonskata nacija*, 643.

¹³⁸ Today, certain Macedonian historians consider this fact an "usurpation" of the Macedonian movement by the Montenegrin Tempo: see *ibid.*, 653.

¹³⁹ According to Ivan Katardžiev, Tempo set up the CPM "in a very non-democratic manner" (*na krajno nedemokratski način*): Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 271. Initially, the CC was based in western Macedonia (which was under Italian-Albanian occupation).

¹⁴⁰ In Serbian/Croatian *Antifašističko V(ij)eće Narodnog Oslobođenja Jugoslavije*, or Antifascist Council of the People's Liberation of Yugoslavia—a wartime provisional deliberative body of the Titoist resistance that administered the territories under partisans' control.

made the Yugoslav leaders reconsider the idea. Otherwise, under the label of the CPY, they risked continuing to be regarded by many of the Macedonians as “Serbs” fighting for a new “Greater Serbian” Yugoslavia. This stigmatization of the communist partisans persists even today in certain anti-communist discourses in the Republic of Macedonia, as well as in the arguments of the Bulgarian historical polemicists.

The legitimacy desired by Tito’s communists was still not obvious, as the activists of the newly formed CPM faced the old problem: the local population’s lack of enthusiasm for being part of one or another kind of future Yugoslavia. The CC of the CPM did not dare to exhort the Macedonians to struggle for a future Yugoslav Macedonia. Yugoslavia is not mentioned, for instance, in the appeal from June 1943 to “all Macedonians,” regardless of their national allegiances in the past: “Serbomans,” “Bulgarophiles” or “Graecomans” (“*srbomani*,” “*bugarofili*” ili “*grkomani*”). In this case, the local communists launched only slogans such as the “national freedom” of Macedonia and its “brotherly cooperation (*bratska sorabotuvačka*) with all the Balkan peoples.”¹⁴¹ The text referred to the “National Liberation armies of Yugoslavia, Albania and Greece” as well as to the Bulgarian Fatherland Front and partisan detachments of the “brotherly Bulgarian people.” Obviously, the CC of the CPM was trying to show a certain neutrality vis-à-vis Tito’s emerging Yugoslavia and to present its own agenda in a larger Balkan context.

The October 1943 manifesto of the headquarters of the Macedonian partisan army (“National Liberation Army and Partisan Detachments of Macedonia”—*NOV i POM*) was composed in the same style.¹⁴² The document (probably dictated by Svetozar Vukmanović himself) addressed not only the Macedonians (regardless if one “felt Bulgarophile, Graecoman or Serboman in the past”) but also the members of the ethnic minorities (Albanians, Turks, Vlachs). After the already compulsory historical references to the Ilinden Uprising, the Kruševo Republic and the figure of Goce Delčev, the manifesto called for a “free” and “people’s Macedonia” in a “fraternal union with the Yugoslav peoples.” The “brotherly Bulgarian people” was invited to join the Slavic union, and the manifesto did not exclude the possibility of forming a “brotherly federative union” of all the Balkan peoples as well. However, despite the concessions to the

¹⁴¹ See Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 302–303.

¹⁴² See Mihailo Apostolski, *Manifestot na Glavniot štab na NOV i POM* (Skopje: Radio-Televizija, 1968).

Bulgarophile elements among the Macedonian population and the reference to a pan-Balkan perspective, the document of the partisan army's headquarters declared, for the first time publicly, that Macedonia's future was to be within Yugoslavia.

Although balanced and conscientious in its formulas, the manifesto provoked negative reactions among some local activists—particularly those from the Committee of National-Liberation Action (ANOK), a “popular front”-styled body established by the Communist Party earlier in 1943. In December they addressed to the headquarters a declaration (*Prigovor*) insisting that the fate of Macedonia could not be solved in the narrow framework of prewar Yugoslavia.¹⁴³ The latter was, according to the ANOK, a “foreign,” “artificial combination” which was a symbol of “the darkest slavery” of Macedonia. For the same activists (including Kiro Gligorov, later to become the president of the Republic of Macedonia), the Macedonian question was a “pan-Balkan” issue, and its solution was possible only within a “federation of the Balkan peoples”: it was a “specific” case, different from the other Yugoslav cases. The ANOK even questioned how well Tito was acquainted with the history of the revolutionary struggles of the “Macedonian people” and with its national aspirations. The declaration explicitly stated the main aspiration: a “unified Macedonia,” which would be impossible in the framework of Yugoslavia. It laid particular emphasis on the Greek and the Bulgarian part of geographic Macedonia, which were seen as neglected by the Yugoslav project of Tito's resistance. The ANOK attacked the “non-democratic” methods of elaboration of the “national liberation program” by the partisan headquarters and even criticized the Serbian influence on the language of its manifesto.

Obviously, the Yugoslav project and Macedonian nationalism did not necessarily go together. Of course, as already mentioned, since the interwar period the Communist Party of Yugoslavia encouraged Macedonian national emancipation. During World War II, especially after the denouement of Sharlo's interlude in 1941, the CPY managed to organize a Macedonian partisan movement with all the characteristics of a national liberation struggle against the Bulgarian occupation of the Vardar region. Yet in this way, the CPY contributed to the formation of a Macedonian national project that did not necessarily fit into its strategic aims. This project was autonomist and irredentist: it was not satisfied with the necessary limitations of the Yugoslav “artificial combination.”

¹⁴³ *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 415–425.

Socially, its advocates were more “bourgeois”: some of them, although antifascists, were not actually communists—like Metodija Andonov-Čento, later to become the first president of the Macedonian branch of AVNOJ. To a certain extent, their discourse had also some Serbophobe nuances similar to those of Sharlo’s policy, while, as already indicated, ethnic Serbs often had leading positions and even made some of the most important decisions within the Macedonian communist resistance. The CPM was itself created by the Montenegrin Tempo. At the same time, the autonomist or independentist overtones of the Macedonian “bourgeois” activists were in harmony with both bourgeois and communist Bulgarian traditions.

In September 1943 the Politburo of the CC of the BCP addressed a letter to its representative, Bălgaranov, stating that the “future form of the relations between the Balkan peoples and states” would be discussed only after the end of the war.¹⁴⁴ The Bulgarian leaders clearly preferred to postpone addressing the question of the definitive status of Macedonia. On the one hand, “independent Macedonia” and the “Balkan Federation” were discarded slogans. On the other, the Bulgarian communists were reluctant to imagine Vardar Macedonia back in Yugoslavia.

Not surprisingly the Yugoslav leaders (both from the CPY and the CPM) reacted harshly to the ANOK’s declaration: member of the CC of the CPM Kuzman Josifovski-Pitu—later glorified as “the second Goce Delčev”—condemned the theses of the “intellectuals” from the ANOK. He accused them of misunderstanding the meaning of the National Liberation Struggle and of narrow-minded “nationalism” close to the pro-Bulgarian independentism of the right-wing IMRO of Ivan Mihaylov.¹⁴⁵ The placement of the Macedonian questions in a larger Balkan context was definitely not expedient for the Yugoslav communists’ state-building purposes. In late November 1943, the Second Session of the AVNOJ, held in Jajce (again in Bosnia), endorsed the creation of a federative Yugoslavia with six constituent republics, one of which was supposed to be Macedonia. The clear formulation of the postwar Yugoslav project was followed by a new conflict with the Bulgarian communists.

¹⁴⁴ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 1077.

¹⁴⁵ *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 425–428. It is nevertheless groundless to assert, along with the Bulgarian authors, that the members of the ANOK were people with a “preserved Bulgarian national consciousness”: see, for example, Paleshutski, *Yugoslavskata komunisticheska partiya*, 306.

At almost the same time as the AVNOJ session, the National Committee of the Fatherland Front (OF) issued a special declaration in which the Bulgarian antifascists called for the establishment of a “unified free and independent Macedonia”: a “Macedonia for Macedonians” supposed to unite all the pieces of the divided region and put an end to the rivalries between the Balkan nations. Thus, instead of being an “apple of discord,” Macedonia was going to represent a link between the peoples of the Balkans. In fact, the OF declaration resurrected traditional (Macedono-) Bulgarian ideological points that have also played a significant role in the development of a separate Macedonian nationalism. Nevertheless, some passages of the text promote a noticeably more “patriotic” Bulgarian attitude: the OF stresses that “every Bulgarian bows down humbly and reverently” before Macedonia, as it is “the cradle of the Bulgarian [National] Revival.” The document also speaks of “the common struggles” of Bulgarians and Macedonians against “the Turkish yoke” and even refers to the fallen whom Bulgaria has sacrificed for the “liberation” of Macedonia.¹⁴⁶

The OF declaration provoked highly critical reactions from the Yugoslav communist leaders in Macedonia (Kuzman Josifovski) and from Tito himself.¹⁴⁷ Just like them, Macedonian historiography still supposes that, behind the independentist slogans, the OF offered a “Greater Bulgarian” solution to the Macedonian question.¹⁴⁸ Following the CPY’s protests, the Bulgarian communist leaders reverted to their previous position: they postponed the question of Macedonia’s status until after the war.

However, a new idea was cautiously launched by Georgi Dimitrov, the Bulgarian head of the Comintern (until its dissolution in 1943): “friendship” and “union” between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia as a prerequisite to the solution of the Macedonian question, naturally under Soviet supervision.¹⁴⁹ In fact, as early as April 1941, Dimitrov expressed in Stalin’s presence his “personal opinion” concerning the status of Macedonia: the best way to

¹⁴⁶ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 1083–1085. The rhetoric of the document shows that, to a certain extent, it represented a compromise on behalf of the BCP vis-à-vis the more traditional nationalist attitudes of its allies within the Fatherland Front and/or a means to achieve bigger public support.

¹⁴⁷ *Dokumenti za borbata na makedonskiot narod*, vol. 2, 435–437.

¹⁴⁸ See Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 266–267. Then one can certainly ask if the “right” solution was only the Yugoslav one.

¹⁴⁹ Guidelines of Georgi Dimitrov from January 1944: BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vāpros*, 1086–1087.

settle it was within the framework of a South Slavic federation comprising all the Yugoslav nations plus Bulgaria.¹⁵⁰

This fact should be highlighted: although Bulgarian specialists have tried to present the aforementioned negotiations between Sofia and Belgrade for a bigger South Slavic state as a Yugoslav imperialist scenario,¹⁵¹ its origin is clearly not Yugoslav. None of the AVNOJ sessions had made the decision to absorb Bulgaria into the future people's Yugoslavia. At the same time, the South Slavic union was expedient for the Bulgarian communists—although it entailed a necessary compromise. Bulgaria had to accept that Macedonia's future lay in Yugoslavia; its separation from Yugoslavia was not acceptable—as Dimitrov put it—after all those among the “Yugoslav peoples” who had fallen in the antifascist struggle.¹⁵² Unlike the Yugoslav resistance led by Tito, the communist partisan struggle in Bulgaria was feeble. The Bulgarian communists were not able to organize a national liberation struggle similar to that of their Yugoslav “comrades.” Their country was not occupied by the Axis—it was an Axis ally—and Sofia's official propaganda insisted that the Bulgarian nation had achieved its “centuries-old dreams” by occupying considerable parts of Macedonia, Aegean Thrace and so on. By 1944 the BCP had only minor political significance, while Tito's army enjoyed high international prestige. This was a significant reversal of fortunes, given the important position of Bulgarian communists within the world communist headquarters and the marginality of the CPY during the interwar period.

Yet the project of South Slavic union allowed Bulgaria to be part of the same political framework as Macedonia would be: within such a federation, Bulgaria would not lose its connection with the region where the Bulgarian communists were still trying to assert their influence. This aspect should certainly be taken into account: it shows that the project of South Slavic federation was anything but a result of “national nihilism” of the Bulgarian communists. Another aspect of the idea—the “unification” of Macedonia—is also important: this point was a traditional part of the Bulgarian ideological programs. But in fact, after a certain period of ambiguous and even hostile attitudes toward this plan, the Yugoslav communists succeeded in appropriating it as well. Thus Yugoslav communism and Macedonian nationalism found the definitive formula of compatibility.

¹⁵⁰ BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vâpros*, 1102–1103.

¹⁵¹ Lalkov, *Ot nadezhda kăm razocharovanie*, 91.

¹⁵² Dimitrov instead proposed to Tito “the closest friendship” between the future democratic Bulgaria and Yugoslavia: BKP, *Kominternăt i Makedonskiyat vâpros*, 1109.

As already suggested by the conflict between the Headquarters of the Macedonian National Liberation Army/the CPM and the ANOK, two articulations of Yugoslav and Macedonian identity crystallized within the Macedonian antifascist resistance. The first one was totally committed to the idea of reconstructing Yugoslavia. It was satisfied with the future federal status of the Vardar part of Macedonia and was relatively uninterested in the destiny of the Bulgarian or the Greek part of Macedonia. This was the agenda of the Macedonian “progressive students” back in the 1930s, grouped in short-lived associations like the MANAPO. In some cases, the Yugoslav loyalty of the Vardar Macedonian communists was striking. For instance, the partisan leader Vera Aceva attests that, following the Bulgarian occupation, the local communist organization in the town of Prilep protected the Serbian colonists settled there by the royal Yugoslav administration—even the “most eminent Greater Serbians” among them.¹⁵³ Insofar as the same activists called for struggle against the Bulgarian occupation even *before* it was implemented, their Yugoslav loyalty shows also a high degree of acculturation that is not necessarily of a Macedonian character. The local communists often expressed themselves in Serbian: as Zoran Todorovski, an anti-communist Macedonian historian, emphasized, none of them objected to the compulsory Serbian/Croatian suffix *-ić* at the end of his or her family name.¹⁵⁴

The second articulation of Macedonian identity was less adherent to the program of the CPY. It rejected the reconstruction of Yugoslavia in its prewar boundaries and Macedonia's total dependence on a Yugoslav state. Represented by former participants in the Macedonian revolutionary movement—in particular in the IMRO (United)—this orientation aspired to a “bigger” Macedonia in its “ethnographic and geographic boundaries”: the slogan inherited from the movement's tradition. Moreover, often it clearly did not regard the Yugoslav nations as culturally closer to it than the Bulgarians. In general, the activists holding this position were ten to twenty years older than the clearly anti-Bulgarian partisans who were loyal to Yugoslavia: the generation cleavage was not necessarily between

¹⁵³ Tsárnushanov, *Makedonizmăt i săprotivata na Makedoniya sreshtu nego*, 206, citing the memoirs of Aceva.

¹⁵⁴ Zoran Todorovski, “Ušte robuvame na starite podelbi,” Omda, accessed December 9, 2011, http://www.omda.bg/bulg/news/makedonia/Todor_Aleksandrov.htm. The interview was initially published in the online magazine *Tribune*, June 27, 2005, on <http://www.tribune.eu.com/articles/79.html>.

different national identities, but it was certainly between two cultural belongings.¹⁵⁵

Facing the question of the “unification” of Macedonia, often addressed by activists with a more autonomist attitude vis-à-vis the Yugoslav project, the CPY leaders took measures to appropriate it. This actually meant that the different parts of the region would be joined together *within* a future Yugoslavia as an extension of its prewar territory. The unification slogan was promoted by Svetozar Vukmanović-Tempo, although quite cautiously: it was able to provoke complications not only with the Bulgarian and the Greek communists but also with Moscow and, certainly, with London. In the summer of 1943, Tempo held meetings with representatives of the Greek and the Albanian resistance where he put forward the idea of a “Balkan Headquarters” intended to exercise control over the partisan movements in Yugoslavia, Greece, Albania and Bulgaria. Although Tempo’s idea was not endorsed even by the Yugoslav leadership and failed, he managed to “export” the Macedonian national liberation movement. After his meetings with leaders of the Communist Party of Greece and of the Greek National Liberation Army (ELAS), these leaders consented to the establishment of a particular Slavic-Macedonian National Liberation Front (SNOF) in the western part of Greek Macedonia.¹⁵⁶ Thus, from then

¹⁵⁵ As a German historian notes: “The relationship between the victorious Partisans in 1944 and the tradition of the Macedonian movement within the Ottoman Empire was by no means as unbroken as it has seemed to be since the 1970s. Many of the founders of the Republic were not, like the Communists of the 1920s, part of the tradition of the Macedonian movement. This led to a great dispute with the older and traditionally pro-Bulgarian generation within the party during the Partisan War of 1941–44. In this controversy, the group of pro-Yugoslav members who were 10–20 years younger than the pro-Bulgarians came to assert itself. This group also included present-day president Kiro Gligorov. Originating mostly from the regional rudimentary middle class, many of them had studied in Belgrade or Zagreb. There they had quickly joined a movement related to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, the so-called ‘progressive students.’ After 1944 they threw themselves with great energy into the project of Macedonian nation-building.” Heinz Willemsen, quoted by Stefan Troebst, “IMRO+100=FYROM? The Politics of Macedonian Historiography,” in Troebst, *Das makedonische Jahrhundert*, 421. In reality, the relationship between generation (and revolutionary record) and national orientation is not so straightforward and deterministic. Among the members of the “old” generation who have been part of the tradition of the Macedonian movement, one can find Dimitar Vlahov who during the war took a clearly pro-Yugoslav stance. And as we have seen, some younger activists like Gligorov were perhaps initially not so pro-Yugoslav, without being pro-Bulgarian either.

¹⁵⁶ See Spyridon Sfetas, “Autonomist Movements of the Slavophones in 1944: The Attitude of the Communist Party of Greece and the Protection of the Greek-Yugoslav Border,” *Balkan Studies* 36 (1995), 297–317; Ioannis Koliopoulos, *Leilasia fronimaton*, vol. 1: *To Makedoniko Zitima stin katechomeni Dytiki Makedonia (1941–1944)* (Thessaloniki: Vantias, 1995), 114 ff.

on, the Yugoslav communists were able to influence political struggles outside the territory of Vardar Macedonia.

At the Second Session of AVNOJ, its "Presidium" included representatives not only of Yugoslav Macedonia but also of Greek Macedonia (Dimitar Vlahov) and Bulgarian Macedonia (Vladimir Poptomov). The act was fraught with symbolism: Vlahov and Poptomov were absent from Jajce, and furthermore, they were members of the BCP. This circumstance almost provoked renewed conflict with the Bulgarian communists. Nevertheless, the Macedonian irredentist project was gradually assimilated to the Yugoslav agenda: in 1944 it was asserted in a number of documents of the Macedonian resistance. It was also officially declared at the First Session of ASNOM—the Macedonian branch of AVNOJ—which was held in 1944, on August 2, the anniversary of the 1903 Ilinden Uprising. The Macedonian antifascists clearly sought to obtain legitimacy as inheritors of a long historical tradition that included the struggle for the "unity" of Macedonia. In his speech, the former leader of the Regional Committee Bane Andreev stated that Yugoslav Macedonia would play the role of a Piedmont, leading the way to the unification of all the parts of the geographic region.

A kind of Yugoslav mini-imperialism supported by Tito's leadership swept away the possible irredentism of the Bulgarian communist leaders and of their sympathizers in Macedonia. The Bulgarian and the Greek parts of the region were not the only targets of this policy. In its first few years the Yugoslav federation sought to annex Italy's Trieste and Gorizia, as well as the Slovene-speaking areas in Austria, and tried to dictate the situation in Albania. Given this "Greater Yugoslav" background, another statement of Andreev sounded quite unorthodox. He mentioned the right of the "Macedonian people" to "self-determination, secession and unification with other peoples."¹⁵⁷

Very soon, similar assertions would lead to imprisonment and other punishments for those who dared utter them. From 1944 on, the new authorities of people's federative Yugoslavia were by no means inclined to tolerate separatist and independentist aspirations. Part of the politically active population was to be "educated" how to be "genuinely" Macedonian. As the historian from Skopje Ivan Katardžiev put it, "the homogenization of the Macedonian national feeling" also required the application of repressive methods (*primenuvani i represivni metodi*), especially between

¹⁵⁷ See Ristovski, *Istorija na makedonskata nacija*, 660.

1944 and 1964.¹⁵⁸ For several decades after World War II, the right Macedonian identity was a Yugoslav identity.

In a way, since the 1920s, the communist parties replaced what had hitherto been the main agents of identity construction in Macedonia: the churches. During the late Ottoman era, thanks to the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Constantinople Patriarchate, the Macedonian Slavs were evolving into Bulgarians, Greeks and Serbs. During the interwar period and World War II, the Bulgarian Communist Party and the Communist Party of Yugoslavia were the forces that institutionalized and diffused Macedonian nationalism. The case of the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) was similar, as a short comparison would demonstrate.

As already mentioned, in 1924 the CPG endorsed the Comintern's line of a "united and independent Macedonia" within a Balkan Federation, despite the opposition of some of its leaders. The new general secretary of the party (until 1926), Pandelis Pouliopoulos, was a staunch advocate of the right of self-determination of the "Slav-Macedonian people." The CPG's newspaper *Rizospastis* published a number of articles condemning the oppression of the Slav-Macedonians in northern Greece, especially after the Comintern's recognition of a Macedonian nation in 1934.¹⁵⁹ Only a year later the project of independent Macedonia was dropped in accordance with the new popular-front tactics—in order to be resurrected in January 1949, in the dramatic circumstances of the Greek Civil War.¹⁶⁰ Especially in the last case, through its internationalist rhetoric, the party was trying to achieve popularity among the Slav-speaking population in Greek (or "Aegean") Macedonia. At the same time, it sought to limit Yugoslav interference and influence among the same population. Since Tempo's mission in 1943, and particularly after the retreat of the Bulgarian authorities in the autumn of 1944, this influence was growing: after SNOF, another National Liberation Front (NOF) of the Macedonians appeared in 1945.

Throughout the civil conflict in Greece, Greek communism and Macedonian nationalism maintained an uneasy cohabitation: they were "incompatible allies," as Andrew Rossos put it.¹⁶¹ On the one hand, the CPG was

¹⁵⁸ Katardžiev, *Makedonija sto godini*, 12.

¹⁵⁹ See Josif Popovski, ed., *Makedonskoto prašanje na stranicite od "Rizospastis" među dvete vojni* (Skopje: Kultura, 1982).

¹⁶⁰ More on the CPG (KKE) and the Macedonian question: Sfetas, *I diamorfosi tis slavo-makedonikis taftotitas*, 113–131.

¹⁶¹ Andrew Rossos, "Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece 1943–1949," *Journal of Modern History* 69 (March 1997), 42–76.

trying to maintain friendly relations with the Yugoslav communist leadership which, after the inevitable compromises on behalf of the Greek party, made possible the instrumentalization of the local Macedonians for its “revolutionary” purposes. On the other hand, just like the other Balkan communists, the CPG had organized a resistance movement with a clearly patriotic character: the acronym of its National Liberation Army (ELAS) during World War II was conspicuously close to the archaized version of the country’s name (*Hellas*). The party had two faces—one patriotic-national, directed toward Greek society, and another one, revolutionary-internationalist, used in its communication with the Yugoslav and the (Slav-)Macedonian leaders.¹⁶²

In fact, in each of the three cases—that of the Bulgarian, the Yugoslav and the Greek communist party—internationalism and nationalism were intermingled in peculiar ways. At different periods of time, internationalist campaigns like that for the Balkan Federation served the “patriotic” interests of the communists. A number of “compromises” with the national cause in fact sought to reinforce this cause tactically. At the same time, as nationalist as they could have been, especially during the period under scrutiny (the interwar period and World War II), the communists never shed their internationalist rhetoric and, in many cases, logic.

A different situation arose in Bulgaria and in Yugoslavia after the communists took power in both countries in 1944. The state-building logic of the communist regimes tended gradually to reduce internationalism to pure rhetoric. Under Zhivkov, the traditional Bulgarian “bourgeois” nationalism was rehabilitated and, in many respects, the national policy of the BCP replicated the “fascist” chauvinism of the 1930s and the early 1940s. Under Tito, Yugoslavia developed an imperialist project that nevertheless was soon stopped. Yet as the case of Macedonia shows, Tito’s rule was no less brutal vis-à-vis the influences of foreign national projects and the slogans of “national self-determination” and independence.

To make things more complicated, in each of the three cases—that of the Bulgarian, the Yugoslav and the Greek communist movement—the respective national agenda was intertwined, through the mediation of internationalism, with Macedonian nationalism. The latter was certainly not the product of a communist conspiracy directed by the Comintern

¹⁶² Koliopoulos, *Leilasias fronimaton*, vol. 1, 111–112. On the Macedonian question during the period of the Civil War: Ioannis Koliopoulos, *Leilasias fronimaton*, vol. 2: *To Makedoniko Zitima stin periodo tou Emfyliou Polemou (1945–1949) sti Dytiki Makedonia* (Thessaloniki: Vaniias, 1995).

and Moscow. But it went hand in hand and was able to develop on the ground of the communist movement: it was used and manipulated but also encouraged and, sometimes, imposed by the communists. The Macedonian case actually shows the importance of the communist parties as social and political agents of “nation-building” processes that otherwise developed within a longer historical continuity and in a larger cultural context.

COMMUNISM AND NATIONALISM: THE DYNAMICS OF AN IDEOLOGICAL INTERPLAY

The relationship between communism and nationalism was a long and dynamic interplay that could not be explained as a “turn” or “evolution” to nationalism. Even in periods when the communists seemed to have “betrayed” national interests (like the BCP and its encouraging of Macedonian nationalism in the 1930s and 1940s), they were instead trying to save the same interests in another manner. After all, even right-wing nationalists and fascists had to make compromises not only through their allegiance to Hitler’s Germany but also in agreeing to territorial “amputations.” For instance, Romania had to accept the loss of Southern Dobrudja and Northern Transylvania in 1940. Communist nationalism certainly did not appear *ex nihilo*. Here we can only recapitulate the factors that made possible the entanglement of communist ideology and the national agenda.¹⁶³

Despite all the pages dedicated by the classics of Marxism to the “national question,” one cannot really speak of a coherent Marxist theory of nationalism. The latter was instead underestimated as a bourgeois phenomenon that would disappear with the end of capitalism. Marx and Engels already considered it “reactionary” in some cases but “progressive” in others. The last point made it possible for their followers to endorse nationalism and in particular, for European socialists to adopt the “national ideal” during World War I—with the important exception of the Balkan socialists. This kind of wartime experience, as well as the victory of Marxist revolution in a country like Russia, provoked crisis in the very “scientific” foundations of Marxism, both as theory and practice. The Leninist concessions to nationalism followed, made with the purpose

¹⁶³ See also Sygkelos, *Nationalism from the Left*, 244–249.

of using its “revolutionary potential”: they were justified by the rhetoric of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, protection of “oppressed nationalities” and “self-determination.” Thus communists also launched or supported a series of nation-building efforts in Europe and elsewhere.

The Comintern’s flirtation with nationalism continued under Stalin. The hallmarks of his “socialism in one country” were state consolidation, reinforcement of “patriotism” and, finally (although not in these terms), of the traditional “Greater Russian chauvinism.” The dynamics of nationalism in Europe itself, beyond communist politics, should be taken into account as well: in particular, the development of fascism and the need to counter it. This was the reason for launching the popular-front tactics in the mid-1930s and during the World War II resistance, with all its patriotic overtones. Another aspect that compelled more nationalist discourse was the isolation and the banning of the communist parties in many countries: the communists had to prove they were not “national traitors,” as official propaganda stigmatized them.

As these points show, communist parties tried to use national feelings in different ways and in some cases experimented with little respect for the people concerned. They often instrumentalized nationalism in a cynical way and used patriotic slogans at certain occasions only to abandon them in the next moment. But more than propaganda maneuvering was involved. As the Macedonian case demonstrates, the communists themselves sincerely *shared* nationalist beliefs. Most of them were communists and “patriots” at the same time.

This is hardly surprising. Many of the “nationalism studies” argue that nationalism is not simply an ideology, an *-ism*: it is something more than, or at least something different from, an ideology, even from such a powerful ideology as communism. It is instead an expression of the very principle of functioning of the modern state¹⁶⁴ and an integral part of the very road to modernity.¹⁶⁵ Although often deemed anachronistic atavism in the modern age and thus anti-modern and anti-democratic as well, nationalism was no less related to the post-Enlightenment articulation of the “democratic consciousness” of modernity.¹⁶⁶ Historically, nationalism was

¹⁶⁴ See John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

¹⁶⁵ Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

¹⁶⁶ Brendan O’Leary, “Ernest Gellner’s Diagnoses of Nationalism: A Critical Overview, or, What Is Living and What Is Dead in Ernest Gellner’s Philosophy of Nationalism?” in *The State of the Nation: Ernest Gellner and the Theory of Nationalism*, ed. John Hall (Cambridge:

intertwined with liberalism¹⁶⁷ before it evolved in various forms of conservatism, rightist ideologies and fascism. Nationalism has deeply permeated modern society while replacing older social and political solidarities and forms of kinship and *Gemeinschaft*.¹⁶⁸ “Imagined” though they are, the modern national communities became self-evident collective notions. Thanks to common sources of influence such as the media, school and the army, national categories had become routine, and they were “banal”¹⁶⁹ by the time the communists began theorizing on the “national question.”

In this context, nationalism’s entanglement with communism (following its entanglement with liberalism and in parallel with its own mutation into fascism) seems easier to explain. It is not a question only of tactical needs or of doctrinal resemblances between communism and nationalism indicated by some authors (collectivism, populism, belief in “the bright future,” radicalism, tactics of mass mobilization) that presumably made possible the “marriage” of the two phenomena. In fact, the communists, even the top leaders of the Stalinist period, started their careers as “ordinary” people who internalized the national agenda even before becoming communists. Although the internationalist character of their ideology led the communists to severely criticize “bourgeois chauvinism” and “Greater Bulgarian/Serbian/etc. nationalism,” the categories, narratives and symbols of national identity were rarely, if ever, questioned. Even the most radical rejections of national(ist) ideology—like some of the Bulgarian and Macedonian socialists and early communists cited above—had by no means abandoned the national agenda.

As this survey of the “Macedonian” policy of the BCP and of the CPY shows, the idea that the communist regimes had “frozen” the forms of traditional nationalism—which presumably resurfaced after 1989—is particularly irrelevant. National imperatives determined the logic of decisions and actions undertaken by the Balkan communists as early as the interwar period and during World War II. Hence it is not a question of some phenomenon from the late 1950s, 1960s or 1970s: an evolution that

Cambridge University Press, 1998), 122–137. For a general discussion of the interpretations of the relationship between nationalism and modernity, see Mark Haugaard, “Nationalism and Modernity,” in *Making Sense of Collectivity: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Globalization*, eds. Siniša Malešević and Mark Haugaard (London: Pluto Press, 2002).

¹⁶⁷ On the entwinement of liberalism and nationalism, see Diana Mishkova’s chapter in this volume.

¹⁶⁸ It is a *Gesellschaft* articulated as a *Gemeinschaft*: Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London: Phoenix, 1997), 74.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

had, allegedly, reversed the hitherto “internationalist” policy of the communist parties. Likewise, a series of “smaller” clichés that underpin these interpretations have to be revised.

The first such cliché is the obsolete dichotomy of “Muscovites” and “home communists”: the latter, being “nationally minded” unlike the former, presumably launched a particular “national communism.” As indicated above, the national policy, including the “turn” to a more “patriotic” line in the mid-1930s, was launched by Moscow. It was advocated by typical “Muscovites” like Georgi Dimitrov, while the “home communists” were often reluctant to subscribe to it. Furthermore, some of the leaders traditionally considered by Western observers to be “home communists”—like the Bulgarian Traycho Kostov—had in fact spent a period of time in Moscow, in the Comintern apparatus.

Second, the nationalism of the communist regimes did not (or at least, not only) originate “from below.” For instance, Katherine Verdery, in her thoughtful analysis of the national ideology under socialism in Romania, focuses on intellectuals and on their traditional legitimacy as guardians and promoters of the national cause. Thus the nationalism existing within the Romanian party and state leadership and launched in most extreme forms during Ceaușescu’s rule is interpreted as result of a “pressure of the national sentiment from below.”¹⁷⁰ A more thorough assessment of the available documentation would show that—on the contrary—it was in fact the intellectuals who were addressed by the party authorities, as “experts” of the national agenda. They readily subscribed to a regime that satisfied their own needs, visions and conditions of legitimacy as national *Kulturträger*. This particular interaction between the commands coming from the top of the party-state hierarchy and the “patriotic” enthusiasm of intellectuals is to be found, for instance, in the cultural policy of Bulgaria that was directed by Lyudmila Zhivkova, the daughter of Todor Zhivkov, in the 1970s.¹⁷¹

Another part of the “from below” thesis is the reference to economic factors of nationalist effervescence *under* communist regimes. Verdery

¹⁷⁰ Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 123–124. For Verdery, nationalism was clearly not an initiative of the party: “Although Ceaușescu may have brought the national discourse back into public usage, he assuredly did not do so from a position of dominance over its meanings. Instead, he presided over the moment when the Marxist discourse was decisively disrupted by that of the Nation. From then on, the Party struggled to maintain the initiative in the use of this rhetoric” (124–125).

¹⁷¹ On the cultural policy of the Bulgarian communist regime: Ivan Elenkov, *Kulturniyat front* (Sofia: IIBM, Institut “Otvoreno obshtestvo,” Ciela, 2008).

focuses on the “economy of shortage” in communist Romania and draws quite a direct link between the miserable effects of the centrally planned socialist economy and the excesses of “protochronism,” an ideology claiming that Romanians have anticipated, or indeed invented, most of the important discoveries and innovations of modern civilization. The economic shortages allegedly tended to emphasize the allocative functions of the nation-state and to foster hostility toward competitors who were not of “Romanian blood.”¹⁷² Authors researching the most economically developed communist states, like East Germany, also tend to focus on the xenophobic reactions induced by central planning.¹⁷³ However, official nationalism triumphed precisely in the relatively “prosperous” phase of the “socialist consumerist” Bulgaria from the 1960s, as well as during the era of Hungarian “goulash communism.”

The theory of “nationalism from below” has one final point that must be rejected: the idea that the communist regimes were actually “subverted” by nationalist ideology. Once again, this idea is formulated most clearly by Katherine Verdery.¹⁷⁴ It is based entirely on the false premise that communists were initially, by definition, only Marxists, hence internationalists and anti-nationalists. “Contaminated” by intellectuals and activists with a nationalist outlook, the regime presumably lost its Marxist legitimacy and finally collapsed.

Indeed, many nationalist intellectuals who had enjoyed full recognition by the rulers and held key positions in the academic and the public sphere during the communist regimes would later denounce the respective communist leadership, accusing it of insufficiently protecting national interests because of its “Marxist”/“internationalist” character.¹⁷⁵ Yet despite the biographical *illusio* of these intellectuals, their career and prestige are the best proof of the contrary. In their last two or three decades, the communist regimes recruited many intellectuals initially persecuted for alleged or

¹⁷² Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 212–213.

¹⁷³ Sandrine Kott and Stéphane Michonneau, *Dictionnaire des nations et des nationalismes dans l'Europe contemporaine* (Paris: Hatier, 2006), 350.

¹⁷⁴ Verdery, *National Ideology under Socialism*, 99: “...I suggest that the national discourse was so powerfully instituted in Romanian cultural and political life that it at length subverted the discourse of Marxism, on which Party rule was based.” See the expression cited above: “... Marxist discourse was decisively *disrupted* [italics added] by that of the Nation.”

¹⁷⁵ See for instance, the case of the Bulgarian writer Nikolay Haytov, discussed in Maria Todorova, *Bones of Contention: The Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria's National Hero* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2011), 51–58.

real fascist activity: *legionari* of the Iron Guard in Romania and *legioneri*, right-wing IMRO activists and nationalist Bulgarian activists of the Muslim faith in Bulgaria. These intellectuals often had greater expectations than a regime that was nominally Marxist—or one simply taking into account the actual possibilities—could fulfill. However, the credo of these people was shared and even encouraged by top party leaders: we certainly cannot speak of “subversion.” Moreover, many nationalist activists of this kind were recruited even at the very beginning of the regimes.

Nevertheless, communist parties did not become less communist with the adoption of a “patriotic” line in the 1930s, and not even with the rehabilitation of the traditional nationalism from the late 1950s on. Until the very end of their existence, the communist regimes did not give up the ideology that legitimized, no less than nationalism, their power. It was only the mutual articulation of communism and nationalism that changed over time. Initially, communists genuinely promoted internationalist slogans, friendship with neighboring “peoples” and protection of ethnic minorities, and they attacked “bourgeois nationalism.” If, by the end of the 1980s, these programs were completely reconsidered and canceled—the minorities were often persecuted and the good neighborhood spoiled—or reduced to empty slogans, communist ideology as a whole was not questioned.

In this context, the promotion of nationalist ideology cannot be understood in a purely instrumental way, as foreign observers often explained it: namely as a means of legitimizing the regimes following the “discrediting” of the initial proletarian-internationalist slogans in the eyes of society. On the one hand, these slogans were not necessarily more popular when these regimes began than when they ended. On the other, the complete reintroduction of the traditional nationalist programs and clichés happened in a period of internal stabilization of the regimes and even of relative popularity: for instance, the case of Romania immediately after Ceaușescu’s refusal to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968. This fact was omitted in the theory that nationalism was the last refuge of communism, which appeared only around 1989.¹⁷⁶ Communism and nationalism went hand in hand, not the one at the expense of the other. Hence neither the instrumentalist explanation nor the perspective “from below” that opposes it is able to clarify the phenomenon of communist nationalism.

¹⁷⁶ Adam Michnik, “Nationalism,” *Social Research* 58 (1991), 757–763.

It must be added that the latter had particular characteristics. In some cases, the communist regimes censored historical references and commemorations as well as specific publications that bluntly contradicted the official ideology. Later these became favorite arguments of anti-communist critics who sought to prove the “national-nihilist” nature of communism.¹⁷⁷ Yet, in a rather selective way, this diagnosis ignores all the aspects in which the nationalist policy launched by communists exceeded the “results” of the old, and nationalist, bourgeois regimes. Bulgaria and Romania became much more “ethnically homogenous” as a consequence of communist rule. The forced assimilation of the large Muslim Turkish-speaking community in Bulgaria was never initiated by the “bourgeois chauvinist” governments. The number of Magyars in Romania was substantially reduced, and the Germans of this country virtually disappeared, following the expulsion of the latter from Yugoslavia and the other Eastern European states.

The fact that the regimes in question were communist had a great impact on the way they were also nationalist: their ideology was more étatist and collectivist than the nationalism of some earlier “liberal-bourgeois” periods. With regard to these characteristics, communist nationalism largely reproduced patterns from the most authoritarian period that immediately preceded communist rule: the dictatorial and fascist regimes from the 1930s and throughout World War II. This articulation of nationalism was the one that was reproduced by the communists: the era of “liberal” and “modernizing” nationalism remained in the nineteenth century. At the same time, the homogenizing discourse that opposed cultural pluralism and the emphasis on “national unity” were effects of the étatist and centralist, authoritarian and bureaucratic functioning of the communist parties and states.¹⁷⁸ The closed character of the communist state and its

¹⁷⁷ For instance, in Bulgaria, neither the anniversary of independence from the Ottoman Empire (September 22) nor even the anniversary of the “liberation” from the Ottomans and of Greater Bulgaria of San Stefano (March 3) was made a national holiday. The first one was compromised by its link to the monarch from the Saxe-Coburg-Gotha dynasty, while the second traditionally provoked Yugoslav indignation: San Stefano Bulgaria included almost all of Macedonia. March 3 was, however, commemorated, and not only for narrowly patriotic reasons: it was ideologically expedient insofar as it focused on the role of the “Russian liberators.” Suddenly, this made it *not patriotic* enough in the eyes of anti-communist circles after 1989, when it was—because of its *patriotic* meaning—proclaimed a national holiday and replaced September 9. The latter is the anniversary of the victory of the communist-led Fatherland Front in 1944—which was, of course, also *patriotically* connoted during communism. This example demonstrates all the complexity of what is generally defined by such hazy concepts as “nationalism.”

¹⁷⁸ That is why some authors see communist nationalism as a consequence of the bureaucratic system and of the étatist “modernization” launched by the regimes: Maria

relative isolation from the outside world—including the controlled and generally difficult access to the “fraternal countries”—made both the cultural homogenization and the nationalist indoctrination of people much more efficient.¹⁷⁹ Moreover, in many cases, the nationalist interpretations of history and of cultural heritage prior to the communist regimes sounded more “polyphonic” and seemed more pluralistic than the strictly dogmatic nationalist postulates produced by official scholarship from the 1960s to the 1980s. And the wider audience was indoctrinated into endorsing the more dogmatic approach, without any alternative.

National homogenization was undoubtedly the big “achievement” of these regimes. In cases like Macedonia, the nation-building imperatives of the Yugoslav communists erased the traditional non-Yugoslav national allegiances. Ironically, the theory of nationalism as a bourgeois ideology turned into a communist practice of constructing nationalism: the communists invented alphabets, wrote histories of the Romanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian or other “people” and published great national encyclopedias. Finally, instead of being a “marriage of convenience,” the relationship between communism and nationalism constituted a mutual attraction. It was more visible in the last decades of the communist regimes. But it was no less powerful in the early phases of the communist movement and of its National Liberation Struggle.

Todorova, “Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Communist Legacy in Eastern Europe,” *East European Politics and Societies* 7 (1993), 135–154. For that reason, they believe that the nationalist evolution of communism did not start before the 1950s.

¹⁷⁹ Even the early critics of “socialism” from the liberal camp—such as Friedrich Hayek in *The Road to Serfdom* (London: Routledge, 1944)—noted that the planned economy required a strictly closed state, as a result of which internationalism would evolve into nationalism.

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